

Chapter 4

Between Prestige and Pragmatism: The Role of English in Shaping Educational Aspirations in Pakistan

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1. Introduction: From Japan to South Asia

Japan's decision to introduce driver's tests for Class 2 licenses in twenty foreign languages is regarded as a significant measure in addressing the country's shortage of taxi and bus drivers. Previously, the examinations were only available in Japanese. Nevertheless, industry bodies have advocated for enhanced accessibility to facilitate the recruitment of foreign nationals. A multilingual approach has already been implemented for the first-class license, which is the test for driving standard passenger vehicles. It is common for foreigners who have lived in Japan for a considerable period to obtain their license in both Japanese and English, enabling them to drive cars. However, to drive taxis or buses, a second-class license is required. This qualification, which is necessary to ensure the safety of passengers, has been available only in the Japanese language for many years. The languages offered for new Class 2 licenses include several Asian languages, such as Chinese and Korean, Indonesian, Arabic, Hindi, Nepali, and Urdu, as well as English and Portuguese (The Japan Times 2024). This marks a significant shift from Japan's historically monolingual testing policies.

In Japan, the prevailing practice is to conduct school education, civil service examinations and driving tests in Japanese. However,

in light of the growing number of foreign residents in recent years, the monolingual framework is undergoing a gradual evolution. This initiative represents a significant advance and offers an intriguing case study in the field of multilingualism. The right to take such examinations in one's native language is known as "language rights." The study of language rights represents a significant area of enquiry within the broader fields of multiculturalism and language education. In the United States, bilingual signage in English and Spanish is a common occurrence in subway stations and museum exhibits. This exemplifies a language right that furnishes the requisite information to residents whose native language is Spanish.

The American Plain English movement has been a significant force in advocating for the simplification of legal and governmental language to enhance accessibility for the public. This movement is consistent with the concept of language rights, which emphasizes the entitlement of individuals to access information and engage in legal and governmental processes without linguistic impediments. The Plain English movement in the United States gained significant traction in the 1970s and 1980s as a response to the pervasiveness of overly complex and technical language in legal and official documents (Sumi 2020). In his article, "The Great Myth That Plain Language Is Not Precise" (*Michigan Bar Journal* 1998), Joseph Kimble challenges the assumption that legal precision requires the use of complex language. Kimble argues that the use of plain language does not preclude clarity; rather, it enhances it, thereby supporting individuals' rights to comprehend legal texts. In his seminal work, *Legal Writing in Plain English*, Bryan A. Garner puts forth the proposition that the use of plain language can enhance the accessibility of legal writing to the public. His works provide evidence to support the assertion that the right to language is a fundamental human right that encompasses the capacity to comprehend legal documents that have a

direct bearing on one's life.

The Plain Writing Act of 2010 signified a legislative commitment to language rights, requiring federal agencies to use clear communication that the public can understand and use. In her book, *Plain Language for Lawyers* (2003), Michele M. Asprey examines how legal professionals can adopt plain language to facilitate client comprehension and engagement in legal proceedings. Asprey puts forth the argument that the inaccessibility of legal documents due to complex language is detrimental to the fairness of the legal system and the individual's right to informed consent and due process. Scholars such as Kimble, Garner and Asprey have emphasized the importance of plain language in ensuring that individuals can fully comprehend and engage with legal and official documents. The movement advocates continued efforts to simplify language to uphold these principles.

Moreover, studies have been conducted in Canada and in countries where English is not the primary language, including Germany and Italy, examining the development of "plain language" movements in these contexts. In Japan, research on "Plain/Easy Japanese" began in the aftermath of the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and has since yielded a substantial corpus of practical knowledge to support foreign residents. In a study conducted by Iori et al. (2019), the evolution and expansion of "Plain/Easy Japanese" are examined. Initially developed as a communication tool for non-native speakers, it has since been adopted by other groups, including children and people with disabilities. The concept is examined further, and its potential as an instrument for fostering multicultural coexistence in Japan is discussed (Iori et al. 2019).

The concept of "language rights" is not as widely recognized in South Asia, particularly in countries like India and Pakistan, in comparison to other regions. While matters concerning language and

language preference are intermittently raised in the context of social and political discourse, the concept of language rights remains less clearly delineated within the framework of language policy. In Pakistan, while Urdu is designated as the national language, English is also recognized as an official language. A multitude of regional languages, including Punjabi, Sindhi, and Pashto, coexist in the region. Nevertheless, research is more focused on the interrelationship between English, Urdu, and regional languages, often within the context of language policy or language ideology, rather than on the question of language rights in and of itself. For instance, Shamim (2011) analyses the function of English education and its influence on social stratification and inequality, which can be regarded as an indirect examination of language rights.

Nevertheless, there are a number of issues that require further consideration with regard to the role of languages in South Asia. For example, in the context of driving license examinations, it would be pertinent to ascertain the number of South Asians residing in Japan who are genuinely proficient in Nepali or Urdu at an advanced level, and thus able to take written examinations in these languages. This is due to the fact that South Asia is a highly multilingual region, with not all of its citizens having Hindi or Urdu as their native language. Moreover, individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to have received instruction in English. It is thus conceivable that a considerable number of candidates may elect to sit the examination in English.

The “Plain English” and “Plain/Easy Japanese” initiatives are principally intended to facilitate communication in multilingual contexts resulting from immigration. They do so by offering the majority language in an accessible manner. Pakistan, in contrast, is an inherently multiethnic and multilingual society in which no single language is considered superior. In light of the aforementioned social contexts, this research employs meticulous linguistic analysis to organize the

flow of ideas and situate them within the analytical framework of language rights. This research makes a significant contribution to the study of linguistic rights by presenting a new case from South Asia and indicating the emergence of a new research field on the “global social strata formed through Urdu as a lingua franca.”

2. Background and Previous Work

South Asia, comprising India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, is notable for its prevalence of multilingualism, with a multitude of languages spoken across a diverse range of regions. In India, the constitution acknowledges twenty-two official languages in addition to the numerous regional dialects that exist throughout the country. Pakistan has designated Urdu as its national language, while major regional languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi, and Pashto are also spoken. Similarly, the country of Bangladesh primarily utilizes the language Bengali, yet also has several Indigenous languages spoken by ethnic minorities, which reflects the linguistic diversity of the region.

In addition to the multilingualism observed at the societal level, South Asia is characterized by the prevalence of individual bilingualism and multilingualism, irrespective of an individual’s educational background. In India, a significant proportion of the population speaks their regional language at home, while utilizing Hindi or English for official and educational purposes. Similarly, in Pakistan, it is common practice for individuals to switch between Urdu, their regional language (e.g., Punjabi or Sindhi), and English, depending on the context. The majority of the population in Bangladesh is bilingual, demonstrating proficiency in both Bengali and at least one Indigenous or regional language. This demonstrates the complex linguistic abilities of individuals in these countries. To illustrate, the Constitution of Pakistan

stipulates that Urdu is the national language, and English is the official language used in public offices. In this section, I will present a quotation from the Constitution of Pakistan.

Chapter 4-251 National language

251. (1) The National language of Pakistan is Urdu, and arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes within fifteen years from the commencing day.
- (2) Subject to clause (1), the English language may be used for official purposes until arrangements are made for its replacement by Urdu.

In addition, four representative languages shall be spoken in each of the four provinces: Punjabi, Sindhi, Pushto, and Baloch.

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- (3) Without prejudice to the status of the National language, a Provincial Assembly may by law prescribe measures for the teaching, promotion and use of a provincial language in addition to the national language.

In addition, the Constitution of Pakistan specifically mentions Islamic education and includes provisions for the teaching and promotion of the Arabic language.

Chapter 2-31(2) Islamic way of life.

- (2) The State shall endeavor, as respects the Muslims of Pakistan,-
- (a) to make the teaching of the Holy Quran and Islamiat

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compulsory, to encourage and facilitate the learning of Arabic language and to secure correct and exact printing and publishing of the Holy Quran;

In reality, however, there are almost no situations in which Arabic is used on a daily basis. As explained in the following sections, Arabic is taught as a school subject.

The constitution also guarantees the rights of smaller languages that are not designated as provincial languages. There are between 30 and 60 other local languages. These include languages with a large number of speakers, such as Saraiki, as well as Burushaski, which is spoken in the northern mountainous region, and many endangered languages with a limited number of speakers. In Japan, linguist Yoshioka is researching the minority languages of Pakistan, including Burushaski, Domaaki and Kati, which originate from the northern mountainous region (Yoshioka 2019; 2021; 2022). The Constitution deals with the preservation of languages, scripts, and cultures.

Chapter 1-28 Preservation of language, script, and culture

Subject to Article 251, any section of citizens having a distinct language, script or culture shall have the right to preserve and promote the same and subject to law, establish institutions for that purpose.

Urdu is the national language of Pakistan. However, in terms of linguistic hierarchy, English is considered to be of a higher status than Pakistan's national languages, as well as notional, regional or minority languages (Manocha 2022, 149). Setting aside the administrative burden of adjusting for differences in difficulty between languages, the expansion of language options is generally a positive development.

Against this background, this paper will discuss the coexistence of English and regional languages in the context of schooling and language rights.

3. Language for Education and the Impact of Mother Languages

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966, Art. 27) states that persons belonging to linguistic minorities shall not be denied the right to use their own language. In South Asia, a multilingual society where English has a strong presence due to the colonial experience, the languages used in schools are also diverse, ranging from regional languages to official languages and English. A significant number of primary classrooms in India are multilingual. In other words, irrespective of the language policy or school policy in place, the reality is that pupils are usually taught in their own regional language. Conversely, a significant number of post-secondary and private primary schools offer English medium education.

The research book *Multilingual Education in South Asia*, compiled by Lina Adinolfi and others, presents a comprehensive collection of case studies on multilingual practices and the latest research findings in South Asia, including India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. It is widely acknowledged that being educated in one's mother tongue or a language closely related to it is of significant importance. Conversely, ensuring the provision of educational opportunities across all languages is a significant challenge, largely due to practical constraints such as a shortage of qualified personnel and teaching materials (Fillmore and Paudel 2022). This is especially difficult in multilingual societies such as South Asia. Furthermore, it is notable that not all of these languages are afforded the same status and privileges. A study has shown that using

learners' mother tongues in the classroom facilitates the development of a strong cognitive foundation and offers a range of affective benefits, including improved engagement, attendance, retention, and well-being. Furthermore, this approach has been shown to have a positive impact on long-term learning outcomes. In a recent study, John (2022) examined the long-term academic performance of Indigenous students who were taught in their native language. The results showed that students who received early education in their native language performed significantly better in all five high school subjects than those who were taught in a non-native language (John 2022).

Urdu is a language of the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European language family, widely spoken in northern India and Pakistan. It has the same basic grammar and vocabulary as Hindi and uses a right-to-left Arabic script. Although Urdu was mentioned as the national language before, there are actually two twists in Urdu. Firstly, although Urdu is widely understood in the country, only 8% of the population actually speak Urdu as their mother tongue. This percentage has not changed significantly since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, and these 8% of native Urdu speakers are mainly the Muhajir community, who migrated from India. Urdu, a minority language, became the national language largely because of its historical background: in the history of the Mughal dynasty, which lasted 200 years from the 17th century, Islamic religious scholars, intellectuals and court poets used Persian and Urdu; during British colonial rule in the 20th century, in the independence movement against the British, the Muslim political leadership class that led to the creation of Pakistan was often Urdu-speaking. As a result, when Pakistan gained independence in 1947, Urdu was upheld alongside Islam as a principle of national unity.

Despite the limited number of sociolinguistic studies of Urdu and English in Pakistan, there is a recurring argument against the choice of

English for employment and the decline of Urdu. This is based on the promotion of 'beautiful Urdu' as a high culture. S.A. Manan et al.'s (2017) study on the use of English among native Urdu speakers and the language crisis caused by the switch. Ashraf's (2018) study on the role of English and Urdu in Pakistan's linguistic landscape examined the impact of different languages on the social status and opportunities of their speakers. The study highlighted the historical rise of English and its impact on local languages, such as Urdu, which are often considered less valued in the labor market and educational contexts. Other studies, such as those conducted by Shamim and Rashid (2019), focus on the language attitudes of Pakistani youth and the implications of the preference for English over Urdu for national language policies and language ideologies. Collectively, these studies examine the complex dynamics between English and Urdu and highlight the challenges faced by native Urdu speakers in contexts where English is prioritized. Consequently, although studies have been conducted on the language choices made by individuals seeking social advancement in Pakistan and the opposition between these choices and those made in favor of English, the debate surrounding the guarantee of language rights for Urdu and other regional languages has yet to be addressed.

Language services in English and other languages include discussions about the right to multilingual education, voting, court interpreters, and interpretation and translation in healthcare. On the other hand, what distinguishes Urdu from English and Japanese is that while Urdu is a national language, it is a minority language in Pakistan, where the numbers of regional and national languages are reversed. Therefore, for Urdu to maintain its status as a national language, it needs to be motivated in both directions: ease of language acquisition and motivation to choose the language.

Another twist is the presence of English, which is widely used in

society. As in India, English is linked to economic and social success in Pakistan, where it is essential for employment in the civil service and the large private sector. Parents and students are keen to learn English, and the *raison d'être* of Urdu, which is supposed to be the national language, is often under threat.

4. Education and Language in Pakistan

Pakistan is a multilingual country, but education in Urdu and English, the national language, begins at the start of primary school tuition, and the language of instruction is limited to these two languages. Textbooks for other subjects, such as social studies and science, are also in Urdu or English. Regional languages are not taught as subjects or adopted as languages of instruction or textbooks. In practice, in rural areas where Urdu is not widely spoken, teachers may use regional languages, but only as a supplement.

In a study by Haidar (2019), he explores how English-language teaching in elite schools in Pakistan serves to reinforce existing social class structures and privileges. The study uses a qualitative phenomenological approach, with data collected through participant observation and interviews conducted in four different types of schools. The argument is that the teaching of English in these institutions provides students with different language skills and social capital, preparing them for different social roles and perpetuating class divisions. English is seen as a prestigious language, essential for career advancement and higher education. However, access to English education is not universal, and there are significant inequalities between socio-economic classes (Haidar 2019).

Table 1. Subjects taught in Primary to Secondary Schools

Grade	Subjects
1~3	<u>Urdu</u> , <u>Islamic Studies</u> , English, Math, <u>General Knowledge</u>
4~5	<u>Urdu</u> , <u>Islamic Studies</u> , English, Math, <u>Social Studies</u> , <u>Science</u>
6~8	<u>Urdu</u> , <u>Islamic Studies</u> , <u>Arabic</u> , English, Math, Computer, History, Geography, Science
9~10 Humanities	<u>Urdu</u> , English, <u>Islamic Studies</u> , <u>Math</u> , <u>Pakistan Studies</u> , <u>Science and Technology</u> , <u>Elective</u> (Computer and IT, Environmental Studies)

*Underlined in the table ... Urdu, dotted lines ... Urdu OR English, not underlined ... English

In Pakistan, the subjects taught in primary and secondary schools vary by grade, and the medium of instruction is determined based on the nature of the language rights in South Asia. From Grades 1 to 3, students are taught Urdu, English, Mathematics, Islamic Studies, and General Education. As they progress to Grades 4 and 5, the curriculum includes Urdu, English, Mathematics, Islamic Studies, Social Studies, and Science. In Grades 6 to 8, the subjects become more diverse, covering Urdu, English, Mathematics, Islamic Studies, History, Geography, and Computer Studies. For Grades 9 to 10 in the Humanities stream (as of the 2021 academic year), the curriculum includes Urdu, English, Mathematics, Islamic Studies, Pakistan Studies, Science and Technology, and elective subjects such as Computer and IT or Environmental Studies. Urdu (national language), English, arithmetic, and Islamic studies are the core subjects in primary schools.

The basic policy on language of instruction is that Urdu and Islamic Studies as subjects are taught in Urdu, while English and Mathematics

are taught in English. In other subjects, such as Social Studies and Science, where the language of instruction can be either Urdu or English, the language of instruction is determined on a school-by-school basis. Schools where almost all subjects are taught in Urdu are called Urdu schools and are common among government schools. Schools where all subjects except Urdu and Islamic Studies, which must be taught in Urdu, are taught in English are called English medium schools and include some government schools and private schools in urban areas. The subjects taught and the curriculum are the same as those prescribed by the national government, but English medium schools have a higher percentage of students going on to higher education and are considered superior.

Regardless of what language children speak as their mother tongue, they start receiving instruction in Urdu and English when they enter primary school and begin learning to read and write. The only exception is Sindh province, where students are required to learn Sindhi. However, in other provinces, speakers of regional languages such as Pashto, Balochi, and Punjabi do not have opportunities for literacy education. As a result, many Pakistanis who attend school are unable to read or write in their mother tongue. When they want to take notes from conversations with their parents, they have to switch to Urdu or English.

Pakistan is a multilingual society where it is common for people to be bilingual or trilingual, speaking their mother tongue along with Urdu and English. However, this primarily applies to spoken language. In terms of written language, it is often restricted to either Urdu or English, with many cases where only one of these languages is used in educational settings. Thus, the use of written language in education is more limited than its spoken counterpart.

A friend of mine who grew up in Quetta, a city near the border with Iran, has Dari (Persian) as her mother tongue and understands Balochi,

which is used in Balochistan province. She used English in school, conversed with her university dormitory friends in Urdu, and due to her extended stay in a university dormitory in Lahore, she also picked up basic Punjabi. Although she is a highly competent woman who became a national civil servant, she can only read and write in English and Urdu, while other languages are only used orally. Despite Dari, her mother tongue, sharing the same Arabic script as Urdu, she never had the opportunity or necessity to learn to read or write it.

In Pakistan's primary education, the high dropout rate remains a major issue. This is likely to include many students who struggled to adapt to the national language (Urdu) or English, which they do not use at home. When discussing language education in Pakistan, the topics of "urban and rural disparities" and the "educational gap between the elite and the impoverished" are frequently highlighted (Tayyaba 2012). In rural areas, school enrollment and literacy rates remain low, and issues such as access to education, dropout rates, and educational quality are ongoing concerns. Conversely, in urban areas among the affluent class, private English-medium education has intensified competition, and there is a growing demand for early childhood education. The author's friend even felt pressured to reserve a spot at a reputable preschool during pregnancy, as these schools are highly sought after and fill up quickly.

5. Enthusiasm for English Education

The shift away from Urdu among Pakistani youth has always been a concern. This has not been limited to recent years. Muhammad Iqbal, Pakistan's founding poet, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a politician regarded as the country's founding father, both qualified as lawyers in the UK. To this day, university courses are taught in English and university entrance exams are written in English. It is not possible to

enter university without knowledge of English. Naturally, pupils and students up to high school age are keen to learn English.

English education has always been popular in Pakistan, and people in both rural and urban areas can read and write basic English if they have completed primary school. Many city and traffic signs are in English. However, this is at a basic level, and ordinary Pakistanis speak English with a strong Pakistani accent. On the other hand, students who have been educated in English schools speak fluent English like native speakers, without an accent. Good English is automatically associated with academic qualifications, parental wealth, and good job opportunities. In universities, English departments are more popular than Urdu departments, and the strict criteria for entrance examinations make it easier to attract the best students. The author, a Japanese, who studied Urdu at a university in Pakistan, was repeatedly asked by people in Pakistan: “Why bother learning Urdu? Why don’t you just learn English?”

When Khan et al. discussed Pakistan, they noted that a hostile stance towards English coexisted with a more positive discourse about English. Students also showed social shyness and embarrassment in speaking English, with others considering them “show-offs” and teasing them as “angraza / angreza,” which means *English people* or *Europeans* (Khan et al. 2022). Parents who want to prepare their children for university choose English schools from primary school or earlier. In private preparatory schools in urban areas, all teaching, textbooks, daily conversations, and announcements are in English, except for Urdu as a subject. Students in these schools also speak English with their friends and siblings on a daily basis, and Urdu is only used with non-English speaking parties, such as grandparents and maids.

At the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), a top private institution in Punjab province, Urdu and Islamic studies

are also taught in English. Students are, of course, brought up with English as their first language from infancy, and Urdu is only one of the compulsory subjects during school days. It is expected that the most proficient students will memorize the Urdu language in class and will be able to recite a number of Urdu poems, which are considered an integral part of a well-rounded education. However, this is a component of their education and culture, rather than a practical application in their daily lives. As a student at this university, one would be expected to engage in conversations with friends and at home in English. The only instances in which Urdu or other local languages would be required would be in the context of providing instructions to domestic staff who do not speak English.

The acquisition of English language skills is widely regarded as a highly effective means of advancing one's social position. This trend is not confined to the urban elite. A considerable number of businesses offer support for those whose first language is not English, providing opportunities for them to develop their English language abilities. There are English language schools even in medium-sized towns in rural areas, and one can see advertisements in Urdu and English for "cramming," "private tuition," "exam preparation," and "preparation for work or higher education abroad" to learn English. On the other hand, I have not seen any advertisements for learning Urdu. One student, who was born into an Urdu-speaking family but whose first language among her siblings was English, found that although she was fluent in Urdu, reading and writing took time and she was tutored by a teacher who had taught Urdu in college to prepare her for high school. However, such cases are very rare, and if you have a limited amount of money to invest other than for tuition fees, English education is generally the choice, and it is difficult for education in the national language, Urdu, to be viable as a business.

The author undertook a period of study in Pakistan with the objective of acquiring proficiency in Urdu and selected Karachi as their destination, a city where Urdu is particularly prevalent. The number of international students pursuing Urdu studies is relatively limited, and there is currently no established methodology for teaching Urdu to non-native speakers at Pakistani universities. The textbooks used were the same ones Pakistanis use to learn their national language. They were not designed for teaching as a foreign language, which presented a significant challenge for the author. Moreover, there were no supplementary educational institutions or other external sources where individuals could pursue Urdu studies. In some instances, other international students were compelled to solicit the assistance of English language instructors to receive private tutoring in Urdu. This indicates that a lack of proficiency in Urdu was not perceived as a source of shame, and it was challenging to establish a profitable enterprise centered on Urdu education.

Despite the growing importance of English in Pakistan, higher education institutions are not particularly committed to English education and research. For example, the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of the Punjab in Lahore does not employ any native English speakers, either full-time or part-time. Additionally, the faculty's expertise is predominantly in literature, with little focus on areas like linguistics (Mamiya 2016, 96–97). The point that there is not much emphasis on “learning” English in higher education is important, and Mamiya analyses that this is because students “have many opportunities to use English in their daily lives, so they don’t feel the need to go to university to learn (or relearn) English” (Mamiya 2016, 97).

During the author’s period of study abroad at the University of Karachi in 2006, a notable proportion of the student population was

comprised of individuals from African countries. The students had selected Pakistan as a destination for their studies because it was geographically closer and more affordable than Western countries, provided opportunities to use English, and was a Muslim-majority country. However, these students expressed discontent when, in what were supposed to be English-medium computer science classes, the instructors frequently switched to Urdu, making it challenging for them to follow the lectures. Consequently, English in Pakistan is regarded as a highly practical tool for higher education and employment, rather than a subject of academic or literary inquiry.

6. Conclusion: Language rights in the National Language

While we have described a multilingual situation in which English is the dominant foreign language, higher education in Urdu, the national language, has long been the subject of debate. In 2002, the establishment of the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (commonly known as Urdu University) in Karachi and Islamabad was approved. This is a landmark university in Pakistan where science and law are taught in Urdu as the medium of instruction.

The Urdu University's predecessors were the Urdu Arts College and the Urdu Science College, which opened in 1949. Both were founded by Abdul Haq (1871–1961), the “Father of Urdu,” who was a linguist and compiled the 22-volume Urdu Dictionary. The Urdu University's charter states that “Urdu shall be the language of instruction and promotion of Urdu,” while allowing the use of English for technical terms. The Urdu University has 12,000 students and 450 faculty members. The main campus, Abdul Haq, located in the old city of Karachi, houses the faculties of Islamic Studies, Law, Commerce, Mass Communication,

Education, Management and Urdu Studies. Another campus in Karachi houses science faculties, including botany, biology, chemistry, geology, mathematics, pharmacy, physics, and zoology; the Islamabad campus, established in 2003, is more compact than Karachi and offers a range of management, computer, mathematics, and humanities courses. Japanese language courses are also available.

While it is common in Japan for university courses to be taught in Japanese, for Pakistan, where higher education has long been conducted in English, the Urdu University was a milestone in offering university education in Urdu, the national language. The university provided an important opportunity for students from low- and middle-income groups, who were economically unable to access adequate English-language education, to benefit from higher education.

From the perspective of language rights, the most significant aspect is the provision of opportunities to pursue higher education in a language that is more closely aligned with one's native tongue than English. By disseminating this information more widely, it is hoped that the fixed idea that higher education is synonymous with English will be challenged. Currently, apart from this Urdu University, there are no other universities in Pakistan that utilize solely the country's native languages as the medium of instruction. The growth of this university will probably result in the establishment of a linguistic sphere that can be employed for a multitude of purposes, including higher education, court terminology, and the creation of highly familiar educational materials, such as signage.

Urdu, Hindi, Nepali, and other regional languages have played a significant role in shaping the history of South Asian societies. English is also an important aspect of South Asia, including Pakistan. Knowledge of English can affect higher education and employment opportunities, creating a divide, but it can also empower individuals. In

this paper, I have discussed the challenges and opportunities of language education in South Asia, with a focus on language rights. There is a growing interest in English language education in the region, but there are also concerns about the lack of support for other languages.

However, the momentum for the right to education in national and regional languages has not yet spread. Thus, the right to study in one's mother tongue has coexisted with English in Pakistan *without becoming a significant issue*. In fact, there are many young people who would not be able to read books, talk to their friends, or get an education if they could not use English. Therefore, there is a need for a society that not only breaks the English monopoly and promotes regional languages but also successfully *accommodates* a multilingual society, including English.

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Chapter 4. Between Prestige and Pragmatism: The Role of English in Shaping Educational Aspirations in Pakistan

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