

Language Ideology, Decolonial Linguistics, and Youth Identity: An Iqbalian Critique of English Pedagogy in Pakistan

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Abstract

This article critically analyzes the English language pedagogy in Pakistan from the perspective of Iqbal, while highlighting the colonial and neoliberal ideologies which affect the functioning of English language education and formation of youth identity in Pakistan. The study draws on decolonial linguistics and critical language ideology research to examine the impact of EMI on the students' multilingualism, teaching and learning activities, and language ideologies. It reflects contemporary language teaching in English in Pakistan with its historical background of colonial rule in which English has been used as a symbol of socio-economic privilege, and Urdu and regional languages have been marginalized. The research builds on Allama Muhammad Iqbal's notion of *khudi*, based on cultural identity, self-affirmation, and resistance to intellectual subordination, to explore the impact of English education on creating multilingual identities and sustaining linguistic and socio-economic hierarchies. Results show how monoglossic ideologies persist in language policies, curricula, and classroom work and how translanguaging occurs in certain places where it would be beneficial for students' multilingual identities. The article suggests a decolonial pedagogy that is Iqbalian, and involves cultural authenticity, critique of colonial epistemic hierarchy and critical consciousness. It calls for a reapproach of English language teaching in Pakistan where the indigenous knowledge systems are also to be integrated and the wider implications of the philosophy of the Global South languages for decolonizing English language teaching are also appreciated.

Keywords: *Khudi* (Selfhood), multilingualism, coloniality, translanguaging, critical pedagogy, linguistic hegemony

Introduction

English is not just a medium of communication in Pakistan; it plays a multifaceted role. English has been deeply entrenched in the power, governance, education, and socioeconomic mobility structures in the colonial period. Pakistan can be called a multilingual society with a rich linguistic diversity, but English is still privileged in educational field and professional field where it is used as a symbol of prestige and social status. Language is also not just a means of

communication, but a tool of cultural domination and social stratification, as scholars have claimed, and has been argued to reflect enduring forms of coloniality (Phillipson, 1992; Rahman, 2002). In this context, the English language teaching (ELT) often reaffirms ideologies that define language legitimacy as native language norms and devalue local languages and identity.

The studies of language ideology have shown that language ideologies are being established in educational systems, which often represent certain language varieties as being superior in nature, thus legitimating unequal social relations (Woolard, 1998). While English medium education is seen as a means to economic progress in Pakistan, the provision of quality English education is not equally accessible to all social classes (Rahman, 2004). As a result, English is used to further the inequalities, not to diminish them. Decolonial linguists argue that these arrangements are evidence of the continued existence of colonial epistemologies that prioritize Western epistemologies and language practices, and that do not make indigenous knowledge systems visible (Mignolo, 2011; Pennycook, 2017). The prioritization of English is not a benign pedagogical choice, but rather a reflection of broader ideologies and frameworks which guide how learners see themselves and their place in the world.

From this point of view, the study adopted an Iqbalian perspective inspired by Muhammad Iqbal's philosophy of *khudi* (or selfhood), which focuses on the cultivation of a dynamic, creative and morally responsible ego derived from interaction with our cultural, spiritual and intellectual heritage instead of imitating others' externally-imposed patterns (Iqbal, 1930/2013). As such, selfhood/self-dignity, creative personality and intellectual independence are important aspects of human development. In line with Iqbal, it is believed that one cannot attain self-realization without getting involved in the process of rebuilding the society around us, instead of copying other people's lives, people need to work towards improving the world in front of them. Identity formation is thus viewed similarly within broader post-colonial identity theory, notably within Homi Bhabha's notions of hybridity and the 'third space', where colonized subjects interact between various cultural identities (Bhabha, 1994), as well as Frantz Fanon's analyses of the psychological impact of linguistic assimilation during colonial times (Fanon, 1952/2008). While the understanding of identity is quite different from that of *Khudi*, both approaches agree that identity formation processes are very much affected by colonial mentality. In the current educational system, for example, there exists a widespread promotion of western norms of language use as better ones. Cultivating a negative attitude

towards teaching a local language when learning a foreign one may therefore cause linguistic alienation amongst learners leading to their loss of identity/cultural traditions.

These are especially important for Pakistan's youth, who are more influenced by globalization, digital communication and education policies that emphasize mastering English. Studies in multilingual education have revealed that language systems are a key part of learners' identity constructions and meaning making (Norton, 2013). In monoglossic language teaching, an approach that treats each language as a separate, self-contained system and assumes that effective learning requires the exclusive use of the target language, however, the complex multilingual situations of students' lives are often ignored. These methods treat languages as discrete and limited systems and believe that learners have to use the target language exclusively to achieve language learning success (García & Wei, 2014). So, students may form negative or deficit attitude towards Urdu and regional language, which might result in the idea that these are of less usefulness than English. This internalization is a de-colonial scholars term for what they refer to as epistemic subordination: the idea that local epistemologies have been replaced by ones that are imposed from the outside as legitimate (Mignolo, 2011).

The study of education policies, curricula and classroom practices shows how these ideological assumptions impact upon English teaching and learning in Pakistan. Official discourses often assume a translation between the quality of education and the use of the English language in teaching and neglect multilingual pedagogical approaches. Much of the cultural information in textbooks, which is often drawn from Anglo-American settings, is rarely available for students to explore local histories, experiences and epistemologies. These practices help to perpetuate linguistic hierarchies in which English is positioned as the language of modernity, progress, intelligence, while indigenous languages are placed as backwardness or as limited opportunity languages (Rahman, 2002). This hierarchy can not only have a negative impact on outcomes in language learning, but it can also have an impact on students' perceptions of the value of their own cultures.

In parallel, research in the multilingual classroom has shown that both teachers and learners are not passive recipients of dominant ideas. Pedagogy in many classrooms is pedagogically challenging and rejects the beliefs of the monolingual teacher, using students' multiple language systems to help them understand and participate. These translingual practices establish opportunities in which multilingual identities are viewed as strengths instead of shortcomings (Canagarajah, 2013; García & Wei, 2014). The various types of resistance in

particular ring true to Iqbal's vision of selfhood, which is rooted in agency, creativity and the ability to change inherited circumstances. The teachers' act of validating the learner's linguistic resources can help to build critical consciousness and create more inclusive learning environments.

It is not only the introduction of local languages in the symbol that would reveal the change in English language teaching from *Iqbalian* (de-colonial) perspective. It requires a radical change in perspective of the underlying ideologies in language learning. English can be a valuable asset in the world but cannot be a means of cultural domination. A de-colonial approach that is based on *khudi* would support learners to feel confident and confident, respect their language and culture, and at the same time grow in their confidence in the English language and culture. This model is a challenge to the colonial knowledge systems, supports multilingual equity and promotes critical citizens who can participate in cross-cultural dialogues across the world with cultural authenticity. English decolonization is in this sense a learning activity and a journey of affirming intellectual sovereignty and linguistic justice in the post-colonial societies.

Methodology

This study is of qualitative, interpretive type and is based on the theories of decolonial linguistics, critical language ideology and Iqbalian philosophy. The article does not use empirical data to answer the question, but rather adopts a conceptual and critical analytical perspective to explore the impact of colonial and neoliberal language ideologies on English language pedagogy in Pakistan and the impact of these language ideologies on youth identity formation. The study builds on theory drawn from decolonial studies (Mignolo, 2011; Pennycook, 2017), language ideology studies (Woolard, 1998), and Muhammad Iqbal's philosophy of *khudi* (Iqbal, 1930/2013) to create a critical lens for examining language education practices in postcolonial contexts.

Main sources of primary data are National language-in-education policies, curriculum frameworks, and English language textbooks, scholarly literature on English language teaching, multilingualism, and language policy in Pakistan. These texts have been chosen as significant texts where dominant language ideologies are created, disseminated and sanctioned. Policy documents offer a window on official educational discourses, and curriculum documents and textbooks show how official discourses are represented in pedagogical practice. The study also included relevant academic literature on multilingual education and language

policy in Pakistan, to put the current debates on English-medium education and linguistic inequality into perspective.

The analytical approach is developed through a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and decolonial approach. CDA perceives language as a social activity that helps to reproduce and negotiate power relations and ideology (Fairclough, 1995). In this approach, the study will be looking at the construction of English as a language of prestige, progress and opportunity while Urdu and regional languages are placed in subordinate roles. Lexical decisions, depictions of linguistic competence, cultural references and understandings of acceptable language usage is given special attention. Discursive processes are studied to uncover the ideological processes that serve to sustain linguistic hierarchies.

A decolonial perspective also facilitates a discussion on the continued impact of colonial knowledges and authority on current language education in Pakistan. In line with Mignolo (2011), coloniality is seen as a longstanding system of power that continues after the formal end of colonialism and affects epistemological, cultural and linguistic habits. The analysis thus looks at how English teaching devalues indigenous knowledge systems and multilingual communicative styles in favor of Western epistemologies. Special focus is given to the discussion of symptoms of monoglossic ideology, the linguistic hegemony and deficit thinking with regard to local languages.

The findings are evaluated in the light of Iqbal's philosophy of *khudi*. The concepts of self, intellectual autonomy, creativity, and resistance to cultural subordination are used as analytical tools to examine the educational implications of dominant language ideologies. The research does not simply consider language as a pedagogical instrument but explores how language contributes to the construction and development of the learners' identity, their cultural affiliation and their perception of self-worth. Addressing English language pedagogy from this perspective involves viewing it as either a facilitator or a stumbling block for the effective development of authentic and empowered multilingual identities.

The analysis takes place in three steps. The first step is the identification of dominant ideological discourses of English, Urdu and regional languages in policy and curricular documents. Second, these images are read through the lens of larger structures of coloniality and linguistic inequality. Thirdly, findings are discussed in the context of an Iqbalian approach to consider the possibilities of a decolonial and multilingual pedagogy that values learners' linguistic capacities and cultural identities. Through this process, an understanding of the role

language education plays in the formation of youth identity is achieved, along with highlighting opportunities for pedagogical change.

The methodology combines critical discourse analysis, decolonial theory, and Iqbalian philosophy, which makes it a holistic approach to explore the interplay between language ideology, education, and identity in Pakistan. The method is especially applicable to revealing the ideology behind education and to suggesting new pedagogical models, based on linguistic justice, cultural authenticity and epistemic plurality.

It is acknowledged that this study is deliberately conceptual and text-based rather than empirical; it does not draw on classroom observations, teacher interviews, or student voices. This choice reflects the study's primary aim of tracing ideological patterns across policy, curricular, and pedagogical discourse through an Iqbalian-decolonial lens, rather than measuring their uptake or contestation in situated classroom practice. As such, claims about teacher and student "resistance" through translanguaging in this article are read from existing scholarship and discursive traces rather than from first-hand fieldwork, and should be treated as indicative rather than conclusive. Empirical research including classroom observations, interviews, and analysis of regional and class-based variation across Pakistan's diverse educational contexts is identified as a necessary next step and is discussed further in the Conclusion.

Findings

The analysis of language policies, curriculum documents, English language teaching (ELT) materials and relevant scholarly literature has identified four patterns that impact the teaching of English and formation of youth identity in Pakistan. First, English remains a sign of socioeconomic prestige and linguistic capital. Second, deficit narratives are often propagated in the educational context about Urdu and regional languages. Third, pedagogy tends to fragment multilingual identities of learners. Lastly, teachers and students produce spaces of resistance in the multilingual and translingual. From an Iqbalian perspective, these results show that the coloniality persists in language education while at the same time offering chances to develop empowered and culturally based selfhood.

One of the enduring observations is that English is still the language of prestige, modernity and social mobility. English proficiency is consistently promoted as a prerequisite for the participation in global economic and academic spheres, through the policies and processes of education. Such depictions are not an intrinsic evil of representation, but are often

representations of English as the main means to success, despite the importance of local language resources. As stated by Rahman (2002) the history of English in Pakistan has been associated with a language of power and elite distinction, thus establishing social barriers between those who have linguistic capital and those who don't. This situation is still continuing today in education where English-medium schools are considered the best and superior to Urdu-medium and regional-language schools.

Symbols are important to the identity of the youth in relation to English. In addition to being a means for communicating, language is also a symbol of personal value and social identity (Norton, 2013). So, learning English can enable social recognition and education, and learning local languages can lead to some marginalization. The analysis indicates that English proficiency is often synonymous with intelligence, professionalism and competence, and limited English proficiency can be seen as a sign of educational failure. These perceptions are a cause of social inequalities, as they become a measure of an individual's worth based on a language difference.

These images could be interpreted from a decolonial approach as an example of Mignolo (2011) coloniality of knowledge. The legacy of colonialist is present when imperial languages and modes of knowledge are claimed as universal models of knowledge that are used to appraise other languages and modes of knowledge. English often plays this special role in Pakistan, as it is the language in which educational authority is granted. As a result, the students might be tempted to think that intellectual growth should be achieved at the expense of the indigenous languages and cultures. These assumptions help to perpetuate colonial hierarchies long past the end of formal colonialism.

The second important finding was about the presence of deficit ideologies about Urdu and regional languages. The study based on curriculum frameworks and pedagogical discourses reveals that multilingualism is frequently perceived as an impediment to educational success and not as a source for learning. Although there is strong evidence that multilingualism has a range of cognitive, social, and educational advantages (García & Wei, 2014), local languages often are not the focus of discussions about academic excellence at official levels. This lack is part of the impression created that English is a language of progress, while indigenous languages are languages of constraint, requiring to be overcome.

Deficit ideologies come into being in less obvious, yet highly effective forms of discourse. Success in education is sometimes seen in terms of the mastery of Standard English

and the use of Urdu or regional languages is seen as lack of competence in the standard language. These assumptions are the result of the monoglossic language ideology that considers languages to be mutually exclusive, and that has a hierarchical organization (Flores & Rosa, 2015). In this model, multilingual children are often judged based on the norms of native-speakers, not their communicative competence.

These ideologies have repercussions that go beyond language learning. Language ideology studies reveal that language appraisal often turns into appraisal of people and communities (Woolard, 1998). Local languages and their speakers can also be seen as less valued, less modern, less capable when local languages are seen as less important. This process leads to symbolic forms of exclusion that are disproportionately impacting learners from rural and lower income backgrounds. As Rahman (2004) has pointed out, educational inequality in Pakistan is directly related with linguistic inequality and access to English education is also a significant predictor of social mobility.

This pattern is unlikely to be uniform across Pakistan's regions and social classes. Elite English-medium private schools, low-fee private schools, and government Urdu- or regional-language-medium schools operate under markedly different resource conditions and serve different socioeconomic constituencies (Rahman, 2004), suggesting that the intensity of deficit ideologies and their effects on youth identity may vary considerably between urban and rural settings, and between Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan. Future empirical work disaggregating these regional and class dimensions would sharpen the claims made here.

An Iqbalian interpretation of these results reveals the conflict between the colonial modes of valuation and the construction of genuine 'self'. For Iqbal self-respect, creativity and confidence based on cultural and intellectual heritage are the elements of *khudi* (Iqbal, 1930/2013). Deficit conceptions of local languages run counter to these principles, as they may lead to the learner's sense of parts of their language being inferior to other languages. Schools can inappropriately reinforce dependence on the criteria for legitimacy and achievement that are external to the school itself.

The third is related to the effect of language ideology on youth identity formation. The youth of today's Pakistan is a complex sociolinguistic entity in the context of globalization, digital media, migration, and educational policy. Students use more than one language in their everyday communication, many of them use English, Urdu and regional language on a regular

basis. Yet, the multilingualism of the classroom is not always recognized. Rather, English is often taught in ways that focus on linguistic purity and exclusive use of English.

The analysis suggests that such teaching practices can lead to fragmentation of identities. Students may be expected to enact various linguistic identities in various situations. English is associated with academic success and professional goals, and local languages are associated with family, community and cultural identity. Multilingual people can make it work with more than one identity, but when some parts of learners' language repertoire are devalued by the educational systems, difficulties arise.

Language learning can't be separated from identity negotiation; Norton (2013) states that "languages are not completely alien to the process of negotiating identity but, rather, inherently bound up with an exploration of the language learner's desired social future(s)." Numerous students spend a lot of money on learning English in Pakistan, as it provides them with educational and economic opportunities. But there are also possible conflicts between global and local allegiance in this investment. Results indicate that some educational discourses promote students' perception that these identities are mutually exclusive and not complementary. As a result, the learner may feel compelled to avoid expressing parts of his or her linguistic background to ensure academic success. This tension has also been documented directly within Pakistan: Khan, Rahman, and Hamid (2021) argue from a poststructuralist perspective that English language learners in Pakistan construct shifting and sometimes contradictory identities across school and community domains, while Hopf (2023) traces how Urdu itself functions as a contested marker of national and postcolonial identity alongside English and regional languages.

This is especially noticeable in the textbooks' images of culture and communication. The content of English language materials is frequently disconnected from the local history, culture and language, focusing instead on cultural references from Western contexts. These are examples of the "cultural politics of English" (Pennycook 2017) in which language teaching is fused with issues of identity and cultural power. Where the emphasis in the educational content is continuously on external models of the culture, pupils have the implicit message that knowledge of their own culture is subordinate to the learning process.

The implications for identity development are quite significant. Young people construct their identity as they engage with social institutions, stories, and learning. Systemic favouritism of a language and its cultural tradition, affects learners' understanding of themselves and others.

The results suggest that teaching English is not only a language instruction but also a process by which certain social values and hierarchies are negotiated. This means that language learning is saturated with issues of belonging, aspiring, and self-perception.

Table 1 summarizes the dominant ideological patterns identified in the analysis.

Table 1

Dominant Language Ideologies and Their Educational Effects

Ideological Pattern	Representation in Educational Discourse	Impact on Youth Identity
English as prestige	Language of success, professionalism, and modernity	Increased symbolic value of English-speaking identities
Urdu and regional languages as secondary	Limited role in academic achievement	Reduced linguistic self-confidence
Monoglossic pedagogy	Preference for English-only instruction	Marginalization of multilingual practices
Western cultural dominance	Emphasis on external cultural models	Weakening of local cultural affiliation
Native-speaker norms	Standard English as ideal competence	Perception of local varieties as deficient

All of the findings point towards the fact that language ideologies of colonial and neoliberal have a significant presence in English pedagogy in Pakistan. Schools tend to reinforce language hierarchies that favor English and overlook multilingual realities. An Iqbalian view of such hierarchies would pose a limitation on the development of *khudi* by making it possible for reliance on external measures of value, rather than building confidence in local linguistic and cultural assets. The study also shows that the processes are not shared and not uniform. However, new multilingual classroom practices indicate the potential for new pedagogical practices that might disrupt the mainstream discourses and facilitate the construction of more pluralistic identities in language education.

Another key finding that comes out of this analysis is that there is some teacher agency and multilingual resistance in the English language classroom. While policies and curricular frameworks tend to foster a monolingual orientation, classroom practices may indicate more nuanced language use. There are students with multi-lingual communicative mode who are frequently encountered by teachers. Given these facts, many teachers purposefully leverage students' multilingual resources to make comprehension, participation and engagement possible. Such practices question the notion that language other than English should not be part of effective English learning.

The field of multilingual education is rapidly evolving and research in this field shows that learners' language is not compartmentalized but they use a whole repertoire of communicative capacity to make sense of the message they want to encode (García & Wei, 2014). The results suggest that this is the case for many classrooms in Pakistan despite the government's attempts to discourage it. Teachers often use English and Urdu interchangeably to explain difficult concepts, provide instructions or motivate students. The students also interact in a multilingual manner in collaborative learning tasks, using different languages to negotiate meaning and to solve learning problems.

In the eyes of dominant educational discourse these practices are seen as aberrations from the ideal of English-language teaching. But the analysis indicates that the multilingual interactions are forms of pedagogical adaptation and not deficits. In multilingual societies, meaning is not static, but rather is dynamic and negotiated, and trans-lingual practices can be used to signify these dynamic processes of meaning-making (Canagarajah, 2013). In a Pakistani classroom, these strategies offer chances to students to transfer and apply their new knowledge to their previous linguistic and cultural experiences, which will improve their understanding.

These practices are not only pedagogic. Teachers question the hierarchy of languages and recognize pupils' multilingualism, which is not always valued in the light of the global hierarchy of English as the official language. These activities make possibilities for student to see his or her language identity as assets instead of barriers. By doing so, educators contribute to the development of inclusive education environments in which students can be present without demeaning key aspects of their language and culture.

This discovery is very much in line with the philosophy of selfhood of Iqbal. The notion that people should develop trust in their own ability as opposed to relying on outside criteria

of worth is central to the *khudi* concept (Iqbal, 1930/2013). This process is fostered by educational practices that affirm the legitimacy of local linguistic identities through acknowledging learners' multilingual resources. These approaches do not ask students to lose their language heritage in order to excel in the classroom; instead, they invite students to use their language(s) in the learning process by using multiple aspects of identity.

The results also indicate that translanguaging is a language education decolonial resistance. Translanguaging is defined as the fluid use of language resources to share knowledge, to learn, and to communicate (García & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging is different from traditional bilingual methods that are based on the idea of separate language systems. In the Pakistani education context, translanguaging poses a threat to the assumptions of the colonial education system which maintains that English is the only legitimate language of academic learning. Recent classroom-based research in Pakistani higher education lends empirical support to this pattern: Panezai, Channa, and Bibi (2023) found that university teachers deliberately translanguaged between English and students' home languages to open interactional space for meaning-making, even where institutional policy favoured English-only instruction.

Strict linguistic boundaries are important to the maintenance of colonial language ideologies. English is built as the language of learning and progress and local languages are restricted to informal or domestic settings. These divisions help to strengthen other social hierarchies, in which specific languages are associated with specific forms of authority. These hierarchies are challenged by translanguaging, which shows that knowledge can be created and shared using a range of linguistic resources at the same time. This in turn leads to challenges of the notion that one's own native language is superior.

The analysis shows that translanguaging is often a practice that occurs in the face of institutional monolingualism. English, Urdu and regional languages interact with productive dialogue in hybrid communicative spaces, developed by teachers and students. These environments provide opportunities for students to experience academic content and to connect to their cultural and linguistic identity. The practices convey that educational transformation is not the exclusive province of policy reform; it can also take place through the day-to-day negotiations over language in classrooms.

A related finding is related to the relationship between language education and epistemic justice. In addition to the political and economic dimensions, decolonial scholars

consider coloniality to exist also through different patterns of knowledge production, ones that favour some modes of knowing, while marginalizing others (Mignolo, 2011). The analysis reveals that English education in Pakistan often neglects to include references to indigenous knowledge systems and cultural languages, and instead emphasizes Western knowledge systems and cultural references. The teaching of globalized knowledge is often more prominent in textbooks, in curricular content, and in assessment activities than is the teaching of local histories, philosophies, and cultures.

This imbalance has important ramifications for youth identity formation. Schools are an important place for forming students' notion of 'legitimate knowledge'. If local cultural traditions are not adequately represented, pupils may think that the generation of knowledge is largely external. These assumptions lead to epistemic dependency and to the continuation of colonial forms of valuing culture.

The solution to this problem can be found from an Iqbalian perspective. Indeed, Iqbal has repeatedly called for the construction of the mind based on local cultural and philosophical ways of thinking (Iqbal, 1930/2013). He was not against the use of the knowledge he gained from the world but urged critical and creative engagement with knowledge, not mere copying. In the context of English teaching, it implies that language education should enable students to communicate with the world, and at the same time enhance students' dependence on indigenous epistemologies and cultural resources.

The results thus indicate the possibility of a decolonial rethinking of the teaching and learning of English. The change would have to go beyond symbolic inclusion to a more profound rethinking of ideology and the pronouncement of language policy and pedagogy. Schools will not define multilingualism as a stepping stone to English, but will value and recognize multilingual competence as a desirable independent goal. Likewise, local languages would not be taken as an obstacle to academic success, but rather as a valuable asset to learning, creativity and identity development. Table 2 presents the key principles of an Iqbalian decolonial pedagogy derived from the analysis.

Table 2

Iqbalian Principles and Their Pedagogical Implications

Iqbalian Principle	Educational Interpretation	Pedagogical Implication
Khudi (Selfhood)	Development of confident and autonomous learners	Validation of multilingual identities
Creative agency	Active knowledge construction	Learner-centered and participatory pedagogy
Resistance to subordination	Rejection of imposed linguistic hierarchies	Critical examination of language ideologies
Cultural rootedness	Connection to local traditions and histories	Inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems
Dynamic growth	Continuous self-development through interaction	Balanced engagement with local and global knowledge

The results suggest that these principles could be a fruitful basis for dealing with the conflict between globalization and cultural authenticity in the current language education. The Iqbalian approach to the various languages is not based on the premise of choosing one language over the other, but on the complementary development of both English and local language. Students have the opportunity to learn English as an international communication tool and to have a strong linkage with their language and culture.

Toward Concrete Pedagogical Strategies

Translating these principles into classroom practice, three concrete strategies emerge from this analysis. First, teachers can adopt planned pedagogical translanguaging (Panezai, Channa, & Bibi, 2023) rather than treating code-switching as an accident to be suppressed, for example by deliberately structuring bilingual glossaries, dual-language concept notes, and peer explanation in Urdu or regional languages alongside English texts. Second, English language curricula and reading lists can be enriched with Iqbal's own writing, including selections from *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Iqbal, 1930/2013) and his Urdu and Persian

poetry in translation, used as content for critical reading, discussion, and composition tasks rather than as ornamental cultural reference. This directly operationalizes *khudi* by asking students to engage English skills in service of, rather than at the expense of, their own intellectual heritage. Third, teacher-training programs can incorporate modules on critical language awareness (Freire, 1970; Fairclough, 1995) that equip teachers to recognize and name the ideological hierarchies documented in this study, so that classroom-level acts of resistance, such as those observed by Panezai et al. (2023), become a deliberate pedagogical stance rather than an improvised or guilt-inducing workaround. Together, these strategies move the Iqbalian decolonial framework outlined in Table 2 from a set of interpretive principles toward practices that can be piloted and, in future empirical work, evaluated in Pakistani classrooms.

The other key observation relates to the potential for critical language awareness in educational practice. For critical pedagogy, it is important to raise the consciousness of the students about the relationship of language to power, identity and social inequality (Freire, 1970). The analysis indicates that many of the problems encountered in English teaching and learning are not from English but from the ideology in the use of English. Accordingly, the solution to educational reform must not be limited to linguistic skills but must also support the cultivation of critical awareness of language and power.

The construction of linguistic hierarchies is a social process, and when students grasp its nature, they are more likely to question the basis for discrimination and to speak out for linguistic justice. This awareness is in line with Iqbal's construct of empowered people who are able to critically interact with the inherited social structures. From this perspective, education is seen as a means of fostering intellectual independence and not serving to perpetuate inequality.

In sum, the results suggest that the field of English pedagogy in Pakistan lies in a contested space, the result of simultaneously engaging with conflicting ideologies. Colonial and neoliberal discourses still dominate the perception of English as the language of prestige, modernity, and socioeconomic success. Often these speeches marginalize the multilingual identities and perpetuate linguistic inequalities. However, there is much resistance and transformation in classroom practices. There is regular interaction with teachers and students to challenge the monolingual assumption and develop more inclusive learning environments through multi-lingual strategies.

From an Iqbalian perspective, the main issue is not the existence of English but the ideology that defines it as more valuable than local languages and knowledge systems. The results indicate that a truly decolonial approach to English language learning should include not only the affirmation of the multilingualism of learners but also the recognition of the legitimacy of indigenous epistemologies, the development of critical consciousness towards language and power. This would make learning to communicate in the world's languages more confident for students, while keeping them grounded in their own cultural and linguistic heritage. In conclusion, a reconstruction of English education along these lines can be used not only to improve the educational outcomes, but also to create empowered versions of selfhood in accordance with Iqbal's vision of human flourishing.

Conclusion

Using the convergence of theories of decolonial linguistics and philosophy of *khudi* of Muhammad Iqbal, this article has explored the connection between language ideology, English language pedagogy, and youth identity formation in Pakistan. The analysis shows that the legacy of colonialism and neoliberalism with its lingering colonial and neoliberal myths continues to inform the position of English in Pakistan as a symbol of prestige, socioeconomic mobility and intellectual legitimacy. The academic importance of English, which brings access to knowledge, opportunities, and communication across the world, has often been linked to the neglect of Urdu and regional languages; thus, it has emphasized and entrenched the social and language inequalities.

The results suggest that dominant education discourses often carry monoglossic and deficit assumptions that denigrate multilingual repertoires and validate and institutionalize a linguistic competence that is Anglo-centric. These ideologies affect language learning practices and help to construct young people's sense of self, their cultural affiliations and their future plans. Educational institutions may be contributing to a type of linguistic alienation that negatively affects learners' confidence in their native language and cultural identity, by linking success and social mobility mainly with the mastery of English. In this sense, the processes of language teaching and learning and the themes of power, identity, and epistemic justice work tangentially.

The processes are not uniform, nor are they uncontested, the study emphasizes. Yet, teachers and learners often participate in multilingual and translingual experiences that defy the monolingual and linguistic hegemony of institutions. These practices evoke the agency of

the educator and the student in negotiating linguistic hierarchies and inclusive spaces that acknowledge the value of linguistic resources. These acts of resistance provide a glimpse of the potential of English language education to become a space of empowerment and identity affirmation.

Iqbal's notion of *khudi* provides a strong platform for this change. Themes of self, creativity, intellectual independence and cultural identity offer an alternative educational vision that is rooted in and challenges colonial modes of dependency, and is oriented to meaningful engagement with global knowledge. The Iqbalian framework of English teaching is not against English, but it is a critical and balanced approach towards English which allows learners to affirm their multilingual identity and cultural heritage. English should not be used as a yardstick of human worth or cultural superiority but as an aid in intellectual development.

This study is not without limitations. As a conceptual and discourse-analytic inquiry, it does not include direct classroom observation, teacher interviews, or student narratives, and its account of resistance through translanguaging is necessarily interpretive. Future research should build on the Iqbalian-decolonial framework proposed here through empirical, field-based studies, including classroom observation and interviews with teachers and students across Pakistan's diverse regions, school types, and socioeconomic contexts, to test, refine, and extend the pedagogical strategies outlined above.

Finally, decolonizing the English language education cannot be achieved just by bringing other languages into the English language curriculum. It requires a paradigm shift in the core ideology underlying language policy, curriculum planning and classroom instruction. Together with the incorporation of multilingualism, critical consciousness and indigenous epistemologies in ELT, teachers can encourage modes of learning that enable participation in a global society and that allow for cultural authenticity. Such a shift will not only enhance the linguistic justice in Pakistan, but also help to shape a new vision of language education in postcolonial societies across the globe.

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