MEGA INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Journal of Arts and Linguistics Studies
ISSN Print 2959-0957 ISSN Online 2959-0965
Volume 3 Issue 4 2025
Pages 6197-6216
Open Access

From Home to High Status: A Corpus-Based Examination of Code-Switching and Language Loss in Pakistan

Publication Details
Paper Received:
August 17, 2025
Paper Accepted:
October 04, 2025
Paper Published:
December 06, 2025

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.71281/jals.v3i4.529

Abstract
The study reveals how language shift and language loss are happening in Pakistan. It focuses on the role of English as a prestigious language among students and the society. The research concerns the increasing dominance of English in education, media and social life which raises concern about the future of regional languages. The study helps to understand how code switching between English, Urdu and regional languages affects people's identities and fuels the loss of regional languages. Analysis of WhatsApp conversations, class debates, family and daily conversations, news, social media posts and interviews are the sources of data collection gathered from university students and community people. In order to analyze patterns of language use and the impact of English as a prestigious language, the study employs corpus based strategies to estimate how frequently people move between languages and under what circumstances. The results demonstrate that English is prominently considered a language of social mobility, education and status. Societies continuously switch to English in academic and professional settings while regional languages are increasingly limited to home or informal use still with a mixture of English language. This indicates that code-switching is not just a communication strategy but also a factor facilitating language shift and language loss. The study concludes that English holds a powerful role as a prestigious language in Pakistan shaping identity while declining the regional languages. These findings have important implications for education and language

policy suggesting that steps are taken to support regional languages and recognizing the practical use of the English language.

Keywords: language shift, language loss, code switching, corpus study.

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1. Introduction

Language is far more than a medium of communication, it is a living expression of identity, culture, social belonging. It reflects how communities see the world and how they define themselves within it. In multilingual societies like Pakistan, various languages coexist and interact in fascinating and complex ways. The importance of language in a community can be judged by the attitude of people toward language. A language grows and develops when people have a positive attitude towards it and when it functions as a medium of communication in various settings in a multilingual society. Similar functions English language performed within Pakistani community. Importance is given to the English language because it is considered not only an international Lingua franca but also a language of intellect, opportunity, science, technology and social advancement while native languages such as Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi and Saraiki are often viewed as informal or less prestigious (Tariq et al., 2013). This perception has deepened the social gap between those who use English (a prestige language) and those who communicate in local tongues. As a result, a silent hierarchy has developed in which language choice reflects social status and educational background. In everyday interaction, this divide becomes visible through the practice of code-switching, where speakers continuously blend English words and expressions into their native languages (Asghar et al., 2021). This is basically a mirror of broader social change. People firstly engage in code-switching between their native language and the dominant language (English), as their proficiency in English increases, they gradually shift from code-switching to

complete language shift, dominantly using English in academic and social interactions. In Pakistan, people begin to prefer English over their mother tongues in every field of life. Gradually, this preference turns into dependency, pushing native languages to the margins. When this process continues, it gives rise to Language shift and Language loss where younger generations struggle to communicate fluently in the languages once spoken by their ancestors (Malik et al., 2024). This phenomenon is not unique to Pakistan instead around the globe smaller and regional languages are losing their vitality as global or prestige languages such as English, French, and Spanish spread through media, education and technology. The study seeks to investigate how code-switching practices shaped by the growing prestige of English language are contributing to Language shift and Language loss among Pakistani communities.

Many scholars have examined how bilingual speakers transition between two languages in social contexts. Myer-Scotton (1993) examined the social motivations behind code-switching and how speakers use it to indicate power and identity. Milroy and Milroy (1999**)** investigated the influence of social networks on language maintenance, while Fishman (1991**)** investigated the relationship between language choice and cultural identity. Crystal (2000) and Graddol (2006**),** among other linguists, highlighted the globalization of English and its growing impact on European linguistic hierarchies. Scholars like Rehman (2002) and Baumgardener (2008) have examined the rise of English as a status language in Pakistan, Mansoor (2004) looked into how this trend affected regional languages among the educated class. These studies enhance our understanding of code-switching and language change, but there still exist some limitations related to corpus-based study that investigate how daily linguistic practices contribute to language shift and the gradual declining of native languages. This study aims to fill the gap by examining authentic linguistic data from multiple sources to

analyze how the prestige of English language directly shapes patterns of code switching, Language shift and gradually language loss in Pakistan. As English becomes a language of the upper class or strata of society, a kind of modernized, sophisticated, educational and civilized esteem is associated with it as a result local languages will die. Several factors contribute to this transition including the prestige of the English language with regarded to its role in a professional and academic success. The patterns of code- switching within community can be treated as a measurable indicator of language shift (as one language loses ground and another gains it).

This study is significant because it addresses one of the crucial or critical sociolinguistics challenges faced by multilingual societies, where there exist gradual declining of local languages under the broad umbrella of dominant ones. In Pakistan, English language has become the symbol of education, intelligence and upward mobility. As a result, native languages are gradually losing its ground particularly among younger generations who considered the English language as a way to success. Understanding this linguistic shift is regarded as essential aspect for preserving cultural diversity and linguistic heritage in the country. The study seeks to analyze the frequency and nature of English insertions in various communicative context, exploring the social and psychological factors that leads speakers to switch between English and native languages, also look at the broader cultural and identity concerning consequences of this process.

1.1. Aims and Objectives

The study focusses on the following basic objectives:

- to analyze how English language considered as prestigious language and attached to high status identity
- to study the influence of English prominence on language shift and language loss

- to construct a relevant fully representative corpus collecting from everyday conversation of Pakistani community including students, parents, teachers, institutions such bilingual discourse can be considered for corpus analysis

1.2. Research Questions

1) In what extent does the prestige of the English Language reflected through code switching patterns contribute to language shift and language loss among Pakistani students and the community?
2) To what degree does continuous English code-switching give rise to language shift and loss as analyzed through corpus based study of collocation, frequency list, concordance patterns and semantic prosody?
3) In what manner does the dominance of English language effects code switching patterns in digital communication, English-medium and Urdu-medium schools discourse and media use of language?

To analyze and answer these questions, the study employs a corpus-based sociolinguistic analysis. The data was collected from naturally occurring contexts including WhatsApp chats classroom discussion, daily conversation and newspaper articles. This collection of written and spoken sources provide a more balanced view of how English language is used across different social situations. The data was examined through corpus tools like AntConc or Sketch Engine to identify frequency of code switching and dominance of English vocabulary. These quantitative findings were interpreted with qualitative insights to analyze the social meanings and motivations behind linguistic behavior.

By combining both numerical and interpretive analyses, the study gives a comprehensive picture of how English language prestige reshapes linguistic practices in Pakistan. Our mother tongue start to disappear when a prestigious

language like the English language becomes a sign of success and power within multilingual societies like Pakistan, not because they are weak but because society stops appreciating their values. Code-switching not only reflects people's desire to belong to higher social or cultural group but also drives the gradual decline of their native language and identity.

By managing the use of English for international communication and maintain the different regional languages that are the keystone of Pakistan's ethnic identity, this study seeks to enlighten the significance of linguistic balance. When language is lost, a whole universe of beliefs, traditions and a feeling of belonging disappears into darkness. Language shift is more than just a loss of speech rather it is a surrender of identity, culture and communal memory.

2. Literature Review

Language is not just a source of communication rather it is the architecture of power, identity, and belonging. The English language in Pakistan, prestige, code-switching and the acceleration of language shift consider as main focus of study exploring how English has come to dominate social and educational structures, additionally it is gradually displacing the indigenous languages. In Pakistan, the ability to speak the English language is considered not only a marker of education but also a reflection of prestige that defines class and intellect. This dynamic reflects (Bourdieu's notion of linguistic capital, 1982) where languages circulate as a form of power and privilege. English has become a social economy, it gives access to higher education and professional advancement while at the same time marginalizing those without proficiency.

It is worth nothing that this hierarchy is rooted in the colonial administration where English was established as the language of governance and law. Even after independence Pakistan still holds English in its educational institutions and bureaucracy, establish it as sign of authority. It demonstrate

country's failure to decolonize its language policy as a result English remains synonymous with advancement, power or prestige while Urdu and regional languages are confined to informal sphere. This linguistic inequality divides the nation along with economic and educational areas giving rise to generation who relate English with intellectual superiority.

Quyyum (2021) opines English is an esteemed language in modern societies like Pakistan which illustrates that in Pakistan, English is the key to prestige and success. People consistently relates the English proficiency with intelligence, confidence and higher social status. The findings of article often reflect the view of urban elites who enjoy authorized access to the English medium education. The perspectives of marginalized communities remain under-explored. This shows a major research gap while the prestige of the English is well illustrated while those not associated with English are rarely addressed. Their limited access to the English medium education locks them out of social mobility and reflect the inequality established by language itself.

To analyze this under sociolinguistics reality, the article draws on the concept of anticipatory investment proposed by Patino-Santos and Mansfield (2025). Their research operated among multilingual mothers, reflect how the families contribute in English education with hope that it will provide a better future for their children. In Pakistani context, parents also prioritize English schooling at great financial cost. English schooling at great financial cost. English is consider not as a language but as a symbol of social welfare (a safeguard against stagnation). English language gain power and prestige while regional languages lose symbolic and functional importance.

This shift from local to global tongues represents a psychological and linguistic transformation, as communities gradually disconnected from their own cultural roots. The interesting part of study is its analysis of code switching, in

Pakistan's educated class, alternating between the English and local languages is common in everyday conversation. The frequent insertion of the English words into Urdu or Punjabi can gradually transform that local languages into English, causes complete switching towards English language. English is considered as The_Matrix Language Frame (MFL) (Myers-Scotton, 1993) which reflect the dominance of the English in code-switching.

The corpus based research by Carter et al. (2010) props up this interpretation with empirical precision. Their analysis of bilingual communities through corpus data reflects that code switching follows systematic grammatical and social patterns favoring the language of higher status. English as a prestige language penetrate Urdu and regional languages through borrowing and syntactic blending. They analyze that code switching when socially motivated by prestige gradually transforms the structure of lesser valued language. This evidence reveals that the English dominance is deeply rooted not just in attitudes but also in speech itself.

The educational system plays a great role in circulating this linguistic hierarchy. Pakistan's schools are divided by language, elite English medium institutions serve the wealthy while public schools and madrassas teach in Urdu or regional languages. Studies like Abbas and Iqbal (2018) confirm that English medium education gives rise to this inequality and relate it to economic success. English continues to dominate Pakistan's public life, not only necessary for professional mobility but also for social belonging in urban spaces. The psychological effects of this prestige are deeply implanted as in young Pakistanis, English is considered as symbol of intelligence and global identity, while mother tongues are considered as outdated or provincial as Punjabi language spoken by millions lacks prestige in educated circles. Many parents avoid speaking it at home to ensure that their children grow up with advanced English accents.

In spite of a growing body of literature, there still remains a significant research gap. There is a need for longitudinal studies reflecting how English dominance affects the transmission of local languages. Previous studies have not dominantly spread light on the role of code switching in Language shift and gradually lead to language loss. Digital communication a rapidly growing domain remains under researched. English dominates social media, online education and digital content creation in Pakistan which future reducing the value of indigenous languages.

My studies cover all these aspects, and call for interdisciplinary studies combining corpus analysis, ethnographic observation and digital linguistics to these previous concepts and addressing these trends. The present study seems to suggest that English in Pakistan is both a tool of empowerment and an agent of deletion. It offers access to global opportunities while marginalizing the local identities gradually giving rise to language shift and language loss. Code switching once viewed as linguistic elasticity appear as fine mechanism of cultural assimilation. Corpus based evidence confirms that this process is not accidental but fully structural, rooted in everyday speech. These studies analyze how linguistic hierarchy is forced through personal ambitions and institutional structures.

Quyyum (2021) captures societal attitudes. Santos and Mansfield (2025) explain the family level pursuit of English, while Carter et al. (2010) offer empirical confirmation through corpus data. Together, they reflect that English in Pakistan is more than a Language rather it is a social force that shapes dreams and divisions. Ged (2013) and Johnson (2009) represent the English as a global language and its impacts on identity, culture, language shift and then finally lead to the death of indigenous languages. English may open the doors of opportunity

but it also closes the windows of memory. So, we must ensure that in seeking the world's prominent language, the nation does not lose its own heritage.

3. Methodology

The study sights to explore how people in Pakistan switch between languages and how this process gradually gives rise to a shift from their mother tongues toward English, which is considered as prestigious language. To reveal this the study follows a sociolinguistics approach with a small use of corpus data, focusing on how people speak and write in everyday life. The focus is to analyze language behavior in natural settings where bilingual and multilingual speakers freely express themselves. Firstly, data comes from WhatsApp chats that mix Urdu, Punjabi and English. The selected chats forms a small collection (mini corpus) using AntConc software which shows genuine communication , this helps to analyze how the English words appear within Urdu or Punjabi sentences and what social meanings are attached to such choices.

In addition to this, some classroom conversation material is carried out from the English-medium and Urdu-medium schools. The aim is to analyze how teachers and students switching between the English and local languages reflects how this affects their attitude towards English and their mother tongue.

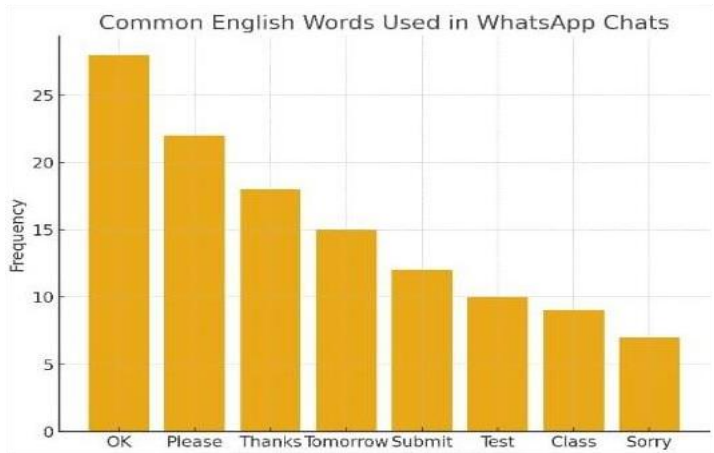
A few samples from news programs and headlines are examined to observe how the English words are used in Urdu media. All data is carefully studied through mixed method research techniques, Sociolinguistics and corpus based study to analyze patterns of language change in Pakistani society.

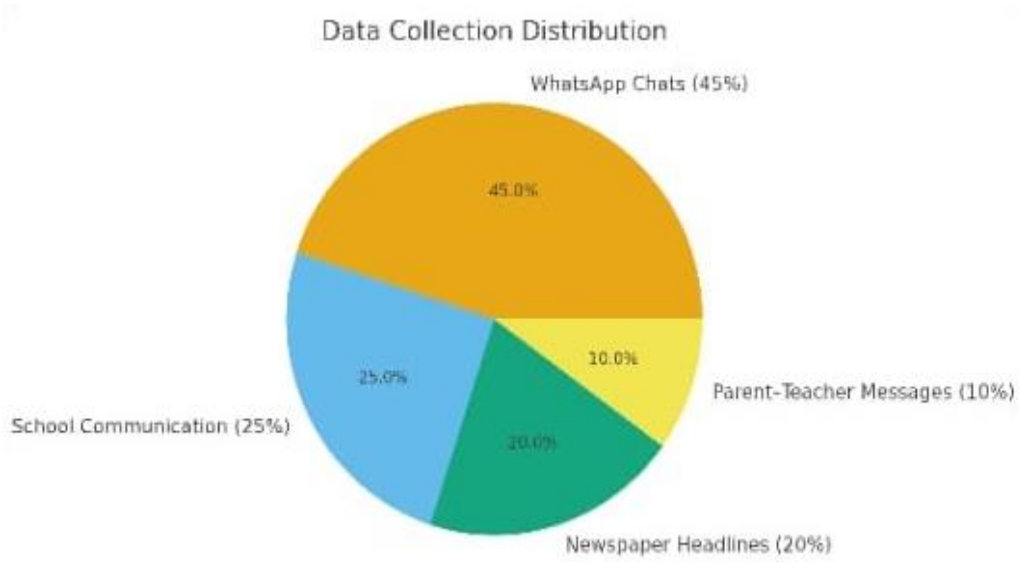
3.1. Data Collection

The data was gathered from naturally occurring bilingual communication, the largest portion of data about 60% came from WhatsApp chats collected from students, parents, teachers and peers group. These chats contained impulsive code switching in daily communication. Some chats like "kal class test hai",

"assignment submit kardena", "teacher ny bola h tomorrow meeting hai". These common expressions give evidence of constant English implanting. The other source contained school based communication about 25% collected from classroom conversations, homework instructions, dairy notes, announcements and communication between teachers and students in the English medium and the Urdu medium schools. This analysis instructs how institutional language usage forces English language into academic environments. Few phrasings like "paper pattern update ho gya h", "class assignment online upload karo", "tomorrow presentation hai". Similarly, 15% of data collected from formal and semi-formal headlines and short notices shared through WhatsApp groups or educational updates such as "online registration open", "annual paper schedule announced" and "mid-term session start", all these examples reflect the prominent use of the English language in our society.

All data in the form of written text were compiled into corpus of (28,000 words) and further processed into AntConc software for analyzing frequency, keywords, collocations, concordance patterns and plot study to determine the semantic prosody which gives us authentic evidence of how the English language continuously flourished and replaced the regional languages.



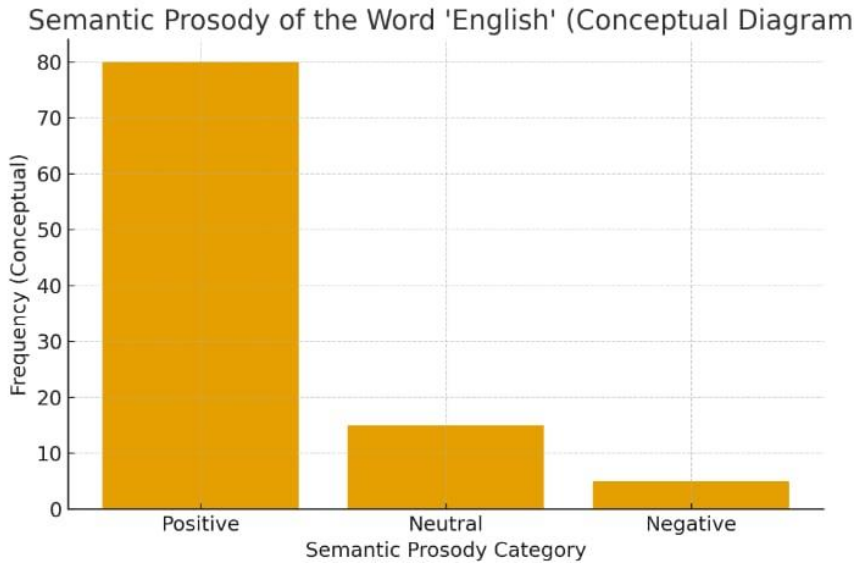


Diagrams such as circle and bar chart visually represent the data collection, 60% from WhatsApp, 25% from school conversations and 15% from headlines , these fully structured datasets gives us a naturalistic view of how bilingual speakers in Pakistan mix English with Urdu or other regional languages in daily social or educational settings. Together these runnels create a variant and strong corpus that reveal actual linguistic behavior throughout informal, semi-formal and academic domains, this richness provides a strong framework for analyzing how the English language gains prestige and has great influence on language shift gradually leading towards language loss of regional languages in Pakistani society.

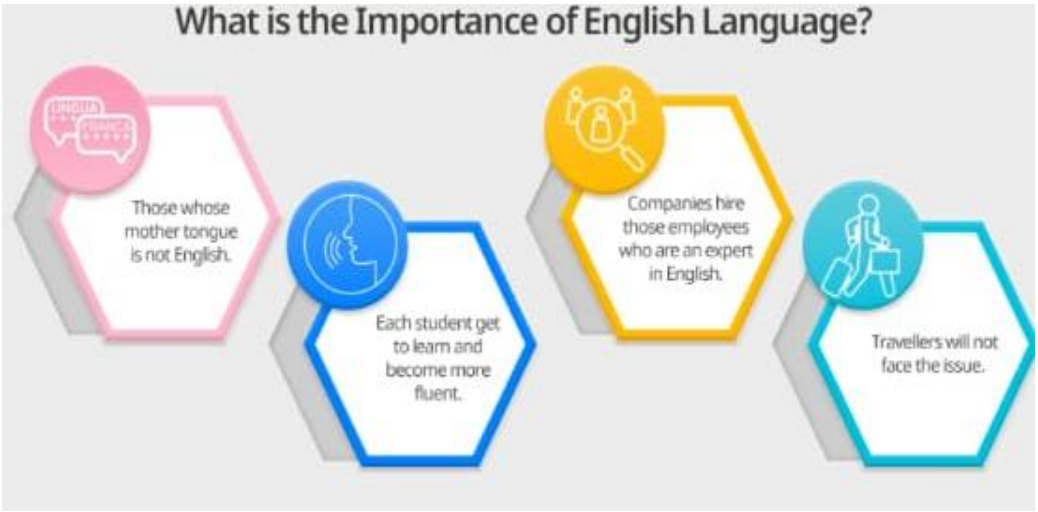
4. Data Analysis

The AntConc analysis makes sure that English plays an important role throughout the corpus, prominently in the WhatsApp data which forms 60% of the overall data ,the frequency list revealed that the English academic words like class (184) , test (152), submit (121), paper (109), online (96) and assignment (91) were

continuously used throughout the data classification. The school communication category involve terms like “paper pattern”, “unit test”, “online session”, “class presentation”, while headlines data include formal English usage like “registration”, “meeting”, “update” or “campus notice”. Keyword analysis reveals that the English words had prominently high keyness values as compared to other regional languages. Concordance lines ensured continuous switching such as “kal class test hai”, “miss ne bola tomorrow submit karvna hai”, “paper pattern change ho gya hai”. Collocation results like (submit assignment), (class test), (paper pattern) show that how the English language set out as a structural linchpin in mixed language sentences. I also analyze the semantic prosody (the positive, neutral or the negative meaning that a word carries with its concurrences). In this corpus-based study, the word “English” conveys a highly positive and esteemed semantic prosody. Throughout the WhatsApp talks, school conversations and news headlines the word “English” continuously co-occurs with the following declarations like academic achievement, institutional standards, modernity and means of socialization, source of civility and power control, evolution and technological innovations or progress. For example “English presentation”, “English as a prestigious language”, “English as a source of power, social identity”, “English as a language of institutions and authority”, such co-occurrences shows positive , prestigious and meaningful status of the English language. People relate the English language with being advanced, intellectual, highly educated, flourishing, proficient and acceptable. However, local languages did not reflect such positive ornament, they reflect limitations, less prestige, highly emotional and informal. This analysis reveals that how English language considered as positive and highly prestigious within Pakistani society, it is socially considered as a means of achievements and acceptance within this present modern era.

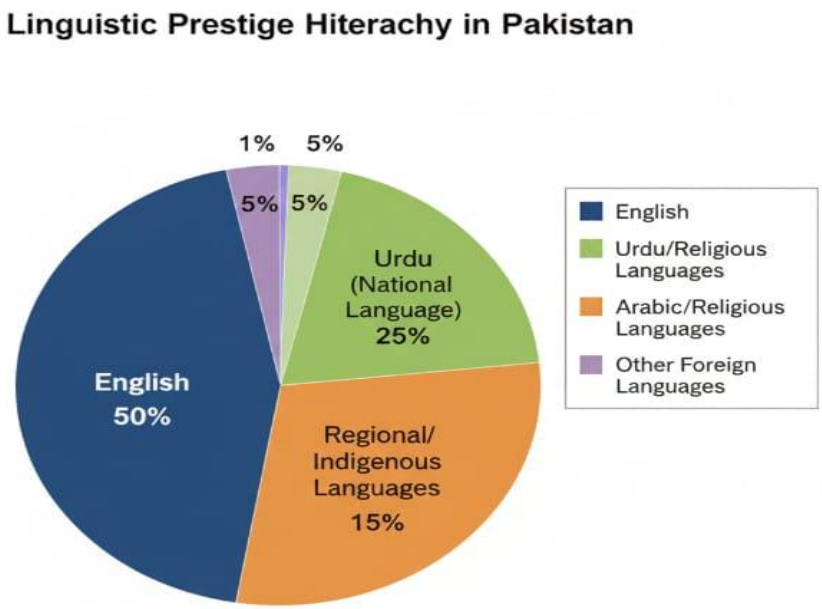


Bar chart further illustrate that how English words dominate the highest frequency slot, while circle chart visually represents the percentage based data distribution. The results evidently reveals that English has acquired an allegorical and practical prestige within bilingual communication. English gradually infringed on places previously dominated by Urdu or other regional languages. With the passage of time this process gives rise to linguistic imbalance where the English language becomes the vernacular or standard language while regional languages are forcefully or either willingly pushed into less prestigious, more emotional or highly informal roles. This operation straightly linked to early stage language shift and gradually leads towards language death.



5. Conclusion

The study terminates that English is continuously outshines in bilingual communication in Pakistan, with WhatsApp (60%), school interactions (25%) and headlines (15%) all reflecting strong English impact. The AntConc results illustrate that English academic words appear continuously and function as important structural elements in bilingual communication. Continuous code switching, the strong keyword tranquility, stable collocation patterns and positive semantic prosody ensure that English is no more a borrowed or intentionally chosen language now it is a prominent source of identity, particularly for the young generation. This process contributes to a gradual shift in linguistic behavior where regional languages lose their prominence and increasing the risk of long term language loss.



Based on the results of the study it is crucial to promote a more balanced linguistic environment where English becomes a prominent resource but does not disrespect or devalue the regional languages. Educational institutions should perform a major role in encouraging bilingual practices in classroom communication which ensure that students are not forced to use only English as only the acceptable or intellectual language. Teachers should be fully trained to maintain this balanced environment within academic setting, helping students use both languages confidentially. Parents, media or digital platforms and policymakers play important roles in shaping the perspective of children towards their regional languages and the English language, we should benefit from the global value of English, along with this we should also preserve linguistic diversity or respect our regional languages. This gives rise to a healthier and more balanced language panorama. The thorough analysis reveals that Pakistan continuously reshaping its linguistic ecology that gives ways to broader social, cultural and academic transitions. The corpus constructed from school

conversations from English medium as well as Urdu medium schools, WhatsApp chats and headlines shows bombastic dependency on English even in written communication. Such rapid modification has taken place not because English language is easy to use, not because local languages lost their importance or power rather such dependency on English language is because of social meanings connected to English language as it is considered as language of intelligence, education, prestige, modernity, success and acceptance, because of this English plays great role in modeling thoughts of young generation to communicate and involve themselves within society. A nourishing linguistic future of Pakistan lies on multilingualism, where English language is beneficial but does not declining or replacing the regional languages while these languages still sustain their ethnical identity and importance within a fully balanced linguistic structure. We should must developed a national mindset that promote multilingualism not considering English language as the only way to success. English language remain valuable and influential but mother tongues remain important as they are our basic identity and roots of linguistic development.

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