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Linguistic (In)visibility and Ethnolinguistic Identity: Exploring the Linguistic Landscape of Peshawar

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Abstract

Peshawar's multilingual Linguistic Landscape poses several questions such as issues of language contact, policy, diversity, globalization, signage practices, and public perceptions. Employing qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques, the study explores the (in)visibility of languages and ethnolinguistic identity and representation through an investigation into the linguistic landscape of Peshawar, public perceptions about signage in the city, and statutory documents. About 5000 pictorial signs were collected from all over the city, of which 900 were selected for this study. Nineteen people, comprising students, shopkeepers, sign-writers, teachers, and waiters were interviewed to get an insight into the issues of representation and identity. A broad conceptual framework, including interpellation (Althusser, 1971), dialogicality (Bakhtin, 1981), and indexicality (Scollon & Scollon, 2003) informs this study. The findings suggest that the city wears an alien identity since neither the language of Pashtuns nor of Hindkis who make 90.17 % and 5.3 % of the population (Census, 2017), respectively, are represented in the public signage of Peshawar. In the light of these findings, policy makers can frame language policies to better represent people and create a more inclusive environment.

INTRODUCTION

Since the seminal study of Landry and Bourhis's (1997), investigating ethnolinguistic vitality of the linguistic landscape (LL) in several Canadian states, a vast number of studies have been conducted about signs and languages on display, exploring the functions of languages on display as well as matters of policy, linguistic visibility, identity,

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suppression and resistance, and other socioeconomic factors that lead to the promotion or demotion of languages. LL is popularly theorised as "the visibility and salience of languages" (p. 23) in public, private, or commercial spaces. However, landscapists have stretched the idea of public and private signs to include languages 'on the move' or 'language on wheels' (Rahman, 2010), the 'fleeting' languages of public demonstrations, the transgressive language of graffitis, people and what they wear, colours, buildings and architecture, and sounds (Jaworski & Thurlow 2010; Pennycook 2009). Like other multilingual landscapes, Peshawar's LL demands a scientific investigation to help us better understand matters of language contact, diversity, perception, representation, and policy about the provincial capital.

This paper explores language policy and ethnolingual representation and identities by analysing (in)visibility of languages in the linguistic landscape of Peshawar, issues that have hitherto remained unstudied. With a population of 4.2 million multi-ethnic inhabitants, and rural, urban, and posh divisions, the city's landscape presents a complex picture. Together with the signage of the city, the study takes into account public perceptions as well as statutory regulations to make sense of the complex relationships of policies that govern sign-writing and the differences between top-down and bottom-up practices. The data are analysed in the light of a broad theoretical lens, encompassing dialogicality (Bakhtin, 1981), indexicality (Scollon & Scollon, 2003) and interpellation (Althusser, 1971), to help us comprehend the complex presence and subtleties of the languages that mark the multilingual landscape of Peshawar. Together these three social semiotic theories provide a conceptual framework which unravels the informative, symbolic, and affective functions of signs.

Research Questions

The study aims at answering two major questions:

Q1. Which languages have salience in the landscape?

Q2. What does the semiotic space indicate about ethnolingual representation and identity?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Some of the issues linguistic landscapists have highlighted related to the lack of visibility in a multilingual or bilingual society undergoing a political tension are identity crisis, otherisation, and economic and political marginalisation (Blackwood, et al., 2016). Unequal and unfair representation and lack of recognition in the linguistic sphere and controversial language policies breed political, economic and cultural disempowerment and inequality which fuel tension and unrest in societies (Stroud, 2016). In the context of South Africa's black community's experience of the apartheid racialisation and marginalisation, Wise (2005) explains how the lack of representation threatens "belonging", "identification" and "community" in multilingual and multicultural localities (p. 171). One does not feel at home in segregated environments since "[p]eople inhabit, appropriate and perform their embodied, emplaced and mobile selves against the backdrop of linguistic or semiotic landscapes," and these mobile selves and bodies are reflected in the complex linguistic and material constitution of their surrounding (Stroud, 2016, p. 4).

LL researchers have paid special attention to the muted and muffled voices of the unrepresented and scarcely

represented ethnolinguistic communities in polyvocal spaces. Marten (2012) stresses the role of language ideologies in promoting certain languages and demoting others, creating an environment of inequality that is reflected in the greater visibility of some languages and the lesser visibility or invisibility of others in the LL. One such instance is the Latvian state's unfavourable policy towards Latgalian which is a major regional language, widely spoken but scarcely represented. This discriminatory attitude toward Latgalian in the LL has exacerbated the feeling of alienation and marginalisation in the community.

Other more recent LL studies have found strong connections between repression, conflict, displacement, historical tensions, identity, collective memory, parallel consciousness, and the semiotic landscape, making reconciliation difficult and leading to suspicions and misunderstanding in multicultural landscapes as witnessed in the historically troubled region of Trieste in Italy (Tufi, 2016, p. 105; Ara & Magris, 2007; Corni, 2011) where the minority community of Slavs and the majority community of Italians are struggling to coexist. Studies featuring Italian and Slovenian students suggest that Slavs have a greater sense of ethnolingual diversity than the Italians who reside in the same city. Furthermore, Slovenian enjoys constitutional and institutional recognition but being a minority language makes it less 'prestigious' and fewer people prefer to use it in the public space (Brezigar, 2009), resembling the power dynamics of Jews and Arabs in Israel (Trumper-Hecht, 2009). The Italian monolingual signs outnumber the Slovenian signs; the former also occupies a primary position in terms of placement and order in the absence of any elaborate rules about the use of Slovenian alongside Italian as is the case in the study of bilingualism and parallelism of Wales (Tufi, 2016; Coupland, 2010). Despite constitutional protection some languages have lower or no visibility in the LL.

The LL in itself might be an index of inclusion, exclusion, dominance, deprivation, conflict, language policy and socioeconomic dynamics, but a study of the landscape and policy would be incomplete without taking into account the 'lived experience' or the perceptions and attitudes of the people (Trumper-Hecht, 2010) who happen to 'emplace' and 'embody' a particular LL with their presence, especially in a plurilingual setting. Most of the early studies were simplistic in their approach to the study of the LL as Malinowski (2009) notes that "the domain of human agency behind the linguistic landscape remains unnamed" (p. 108), and research is restricted to the study of the bilingual codes, and the difference between government sponsored and private signs. Both Malinowski (2009) and Trumper-Hecht (2010) favour multimodal frameworks, the latter drawing on Lefebvre's (1991) triadic model of conceived, perceived, and lived spaces (p. 33). It is this 'lived space' which reveals the truth behind the scene: how does it feel and what does it mean to inhabit and 'embody' a space? Han and Wu's (2020) study of one of the biggest Chinese cities Guangzhou triangulates data from the linguistic landscape, language policy, and the lived experience of the inhabitants of the city to answer questions related to language conflict and representation. What is absent from the landscape is Cantonese language and culture, and that is confirmed by the respondents who see "Cantonese as Guangzhou identity" (p. 11) which is missing from the LL of city. The language policy of the "monoglot linguistic regime" (p. 20) is seriously under-representative of the multicultural population of the city. This linguistic homogenization of a polyphonic and multicultural city erases the diverse identities of people residing in Guangzhou.

Invisibility and the related ideas of exclusion, underrepresentation and conflict suggested by ethnolinguistically diverse LLs are complex and must be studied carefully. Thistlethwaite and Sebba's (2015) and

Moriarty's (2012) studies provide an interesting account of the simultaneous presence and absence of Irish in the Ennis town of the Republic of Ireland. According to these studies, movements seeking the revival of Irish have been active since the independence of the Republic of Ireland (ROI). As a result of these Irish nationalist sentiments, ROI has adopted a bilingual policy that puts Irish as the first and English as the second language of the country, making it mandatory for all public signage to use Irish and appointing a Language Commission which looks after the implementation of the bilingual policy. More importantly, all schools teach a compulsory Irish course from age 4 to 18 but most of these people leave Irish 'behind' after school. These institutional measures have led to the presence of Irish on all public signs in Ennis but, surprisingly, the language remains almost entirely absent from the private language landscape and the ordinary lives of the people. These revivalist moves have been a failure and the public space presents a view of 'passive exclusion' of the Irish language. In Ennis, out of 3419 (14 percent) 224 (0.8 percent of the total population) people speak Irish outside school according to the 2011 Census. These are the facts and factors overlooked by the local and national media and the Irish language revivalists with their legislative and promotional moves (Thistlethwaite & Sebba, 2015). This passive exclusion of Irish and the conflict between policy and practice has been reported by Moriarty (2012) as well. Moriarty's analysis of 'The Dingle wall' with a town where most of the Irish revival supporters reside reveals that the so-called 'Irish wall' is scribbled all over with English—the default language of the people.

LL researchers have also shown interest in metropolitan and transnational cities with a considerable immigrant population such as the city of Milan in Italy. The country is home to more than five million multilingual immigrants which makes 8 percent of the total population of the country (Barni & Bagna, 2015; Calvi & Uberti-Bona, 2020). Linguistic landscapes in general and cityscapes in particular with their vast economic activities and a growing ethnolinguistic diversity offer an ever-changing space that needs a reassessment every now and then. LL research in these polyethnic and polyphonic spaces is contexualised in the emergent hybrid identities, language policies at the level of the state and the default and de facto policies of the LL—the socio-demographic changes occasioned by the immigrant population.

Besides identity negotiations, emerging out of large scale migrations, some new-born nation states, contested regions, and historical events have led to the re-formation of LLs which are expressive of the reconstruction of social, cultural, political, moral and economic orders and identities (Muth, 2015; Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). Through a study of the bilingual Russian-Armenian LL of Nagorno-Karabakh, Muth (2015) stresses the role of signage in remaking and reshaping the sociolinguistic dynamics of urban space (Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009). The LL encompasses not just linguistic signs; "architecture, memorials and their placement in time and space" (Muth, 2015, p. 78) are part of the semiotic system of the landscape.

The politics of identity and representation of linguistic landscapes might seem simple but are actually very complex such as the LL of Taipei, Taiwan. An outsider who is unaware of the political history, periods of colonization, and political, linguistic and cultural repression of Taiwan is very likely going to read Taipei's Mandarin-dominated LL as strongly indexical of Taiwan's "Chinese identity" (Curtin, 2015, p. 105). This assumption of Taiwan's "Chinese identity" is paradoxical because Taiwanese are differently and differentially Chinese in their identity. While majority of Taiwanese are descendants of Han Chinese and almost everyone can speak Mandarin, they have maintained a

different linguistic and cultural Chinese heritage: Taiwan and Taipei use and passionately promote 'traditional Chinese characters' instead of the Simplified or Standardized Chinese Characters officially recognized and promoted in the People's Republic of China (pp. 103-105). Taiwan's simple-looking linguistic difference of using the 'traditional Chinese characters' instead of the simplified ones is an announcement of political, cultural and historical differences with the People's Republic of China, signifying a 'Chineseness' with a difference and claiming the preservation of the 'real' Chinese culture.

In her study of three different geopolitical spaces, the Republic of Congo, Bahrain and Singapore, Kasanga (2015) argues that the exclusion of ethnolinguistic groups not only causes alienation, identity crisis and a negative self-image, it can also have serious repercussions if a significant linguistic community is excluded from necessary 'information' by neglecting their language since the 'informative function' is the primary function of language. The informative function of signs refers to functions such as warnings against danger, safety measures, reminders of responsibility for personal and public care and well-being, cautions, signaling directions or any other important piece of information (Blees and Mak, 2012; Landry & Bourhis, 1997).

To sum up, however fleeting, fluid and evolving identities of citizens are, the absence of an ethnolinguistic group's culture from the linguistic landscape speaks of a community disowned, otherised and marginalized. A manipulated LL with under/over-representation of languages in plurilingual societies is indexical of bad language planning and policy. Invisibility in the LL could not only generate a feeling of being uncared for and left out but does in fact suggest the linguistic, cultural, political and economic disenfranchising of a group. Wiping a community's language out of the public space in multilingual setups is equal to erasing their agency, cultural participation and imagination, and their right to representation—a case of serious identity crisis. These hegemonic, marginalizing, and alienating—both in terms of class and gender—practices are implemented and maintained through exclusionary tools such as biased and blind policies and the hierarchical medium of instruction in the education system that favours the elites of a country (Kasanga, 2015). We should notice the multi-layered semiotics of LL for the political temperature of sociolinguistically embattled places because "politics happens where one may be led to least expect it – in the nooks and crannies of everyday life, outside of institutionalized contexts" (Besnier, 2009, p. 11). LLs with 'transgressive' semiotics such as graffiti are expressive of the subversive 'acts of citizenship' (Stroud, 2016) against an unfair representation in the landscape.

In a country troubled by ethnolinguistic movements which have contributed to events as serious as the Fall of Dhaka (Rahman, 1996), matters related to language and representation pose questions that need serious investigation. This study investigates the LL of Peshawar to unravel issues of identity and representation since this capital city hosts two major ethnic communities and a large number of migrants from across the province who negotiate their identities in the landscape. Language contact, signage practices, public and private policies and displays of language are issues closely related to identity and representation that have hitherto received little academic attention (Hussain et al., 2022).

METHODOLOGY

This mixed method study explores the visibility and absence of languages in the LL of Peshawar in the light of public signs from all over Peshawar, official language policy documents, and the semi-controlled interviews from 21 people, including shopkeepers, shoppers, visitors, and sign-makers. Out of 5000 signs collected from 36 different locations in the city, 900 were selected for this study, including both top-down and bottom-up signs. Keeping in mind the clarity and visibility of the pictorial signs, 25 signs per each location were randomly selected for codification and analysis. These signs were codified as (1) Monolingual, (2) Bilingual (3) Multilingual signs, (4) Transliterated (5) Monocodal Biscriptal (6), Monoscriptal Bicodal, (7) Official, and (8) Private. The semi-controlled interviews, featuring 16 Pashto and 5 Hindko speakers, were conducted in various places including shops, various departments on university campuses, and cafés. Participants were asked two questions: whether the languages of signage in the city are representative of the population or not; whether language is an index of identity or not. These interviews were transcribed and translated since all the participants spoke languages other than English.

Multiple policy documents were examined to measure the impact of statutory regulations on language display in public spaces in Peshawar. Official documents which inform language policy and practice include the Constitution of Pakistan (1973), regulations endorsing the promotion or impoverishment of languages such as the National Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training), the Local Government, Cantonment Board Peshawar (CBP), and Peshawar Development Authority's (PDA) regulations.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

1. Analysis of Statutory Regulations

Article 251 of the Constitution (1973) sounds unbiased but a critical analysis of its three clauses demonstrates that declaring Urdu unequivocally as a 'national language' reduces the rest of the languages to the status of 'not national languages' and a diminished worth. In fact, clause 3 of the article explicitly designates any language other than Urdu as 'a provincial language,' which may be interpreted as saying that the indigenous languages have, constitutionally, a lesser and local value. Article 251 also signifies that while framing a law regarding an indigenous language, a provincial government will have to ensure that the status and prestige of the 'national language' remains intact and unchanged.

While the successive federal governments have failed to enact laws that promote the indigenous languages in Pakistan, the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa did pass The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Promotion of Regional Language Authority Act, 2012, the maiden effort by a government in the province for granting the languages spoken across the province an official recognition, value, support and protection since the British left the subcontinent in 1947. On the floor of provincial assembly, the promotion or demotion of languages has been a contentious political issue since the Dr. Khan Sahib-led government under the British Raj in 1937. The 1937 anti-colonial coalition government of the Red Shirts (Khudai Khidmatgar) and Congress made considerable efforts for the promotion of regional languages, particularly Pashto, but the British did not encourage such legislation and, in fact, created every possible hurdle for Pashto to relegate it to an inferior position. Divide on the lines of ethnicity and religion—Hindi

versus Urdu or Hindus versus Muslims—was a British ploy used to weaken the political unity of India against the Empire, creating an environment for the promotion of Urdu and the demotion of other languages (Rahman, 2011, p. 11; 1996, pp. 137-141). This political and historical context makes the 2012 Act a significant move. Although the Act (2012) does mention the measures to be taken for the promotion of regional languages, it does not make any specific reference to the use of the indigenous languages for public signage. There has been little progress in this regard since 2012, making the Act merely cosmetic in effect.

Although educational policies are not directly related to public signage, such policies do strongly affect the language choices of citizens since the state endorses and promotes certain languages and demotes others. English and Urdu are the default languages of instruction and education in Pakistan. The National Curriculum Framework, 2018 (Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training) does recognize the need for "making the Pakistani children multi-lingually [sic] proficient" (NCF 2018, p. 10) but envisages no real steps to ensure and promote linguistic diversity. In fact, the NCF aims at promoting 'national cohesion' and 'integration', not the diversity that makes Pakistan a federation. Similarly, the Single National Curriculum (SNC) neglects the mother tongues of citizens as well as other constitutional and educational rights and needs. The SNC is a controversial project that creates and anticipates a state with "Social Cohesion and National Integration" (Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training), ignoring the diversity of Pakistan's population as well as constitutional provisions. The languages of instruction in SNC are Urdu and English even at the primary level. The Englishization of the education system has played a divisive role by creating a class division and linguistic disequilibrium; on the other hand, the Urduisation of education has been used for national integration at the cost of linguistic diversity (Rahman, 2010; 1996) and as a policy towards "Pakistanization" (Khan, 2016). The current policy of the languages of instruction is discriminatory towards languages other than English and Urdu, a policy that has serious repercussions for the indigenous languages in the country: the indigenous languages do not get the patronage, status, prestige, and environment which leads to pushing these languages to the back seat. This attitude towards the indigenous languages in the education system may have a significant bearing on the signage of the city.

As is obvious from the above discussion, a healthy and pluralistic societal make-up has been discounted with the explicit intensions of engineering 'national cohesion' and 'integration'. The concept of enjoying diversity within universality as envisaged in pluralism has not been paid attention to. Societies are by default dialogic. Monologic attempts remain only attempts with the only possible outcomes of psychological disorientation and alienation. Pakistan's language policy reflects a typical mind-set of a modern nation state system. Furthermore, it, unrealistically, ignores that languages may not approve of top-down interventions as envisioned in the various policy documents.

2. Analysis of Pictorial Signs

The count of each language type, language combinations, scriptal and codal variations, and sign source given in Table 5.1 show that English is not only the dominant language in the linguistic landscape of Peshawar with 25.5 % signs in the English Only category, it is also the principal code with 67.4 % signs containing transliterations of English into Urdu script, and majority of the Official signs, that make 9.5 % of the total signs, are written in English. Following English, Urdu appears as the second most prominent language. Although the Urdu Only signs (1.8 %) do not make a large number of the total signs in the city, Urdu also features along with English in the English Urdu Bilingual (16.7

%) category and in combination with Other (mostly Arabic) languages in 5 % signs. The Monocodal Biscriptal signs (with English code and both Roman and Urdu script, 11.3 %) and Monoscriptal Bicodal signs (with English as well as Urdu code but Urdu only script with just a couple of exceptions, 25.4 %) too suggest the dominating role and appearance of English and Urdu. The official patronage and prestige bestowed on English and Urdu seems to have carved a big space for these two languages (Article 251 of the Constitution). On the other hand, the largest language of the city, Pashto (90.17%, Census 2017), is almost absent from the LL with just 0.5 percent signs in the Pashto Only category and less than 20 total occurrences. But even more noticeable is the total absence of Hindko, the second largest language of the city (5.3%, Census 2017). Compared with Pashto and Hindko, even the languages grouped as 'Other' (mostly Arabic) have a greater visibility (5 %). The 45 Arabic signs, in the category of English or Urdu and Other, have a symbolic and affective function (Han & Wu, 2020; Althusser, 1971) rather than a direct communicative function.

Table 5.1. A Snapshot of the Linguistic Landscape

Sign Category	Number	Percentage
English Only	230	25.5
Urdu Only	17	1.8
Pashto Only	5	0.5
Hindko Only	0	0
English Urdu Bilingual	151	16.7
English Pashto Bilingual	4	0.4
Urdu Pashto Bilingual	9	1
Multilingual	13	1.4
Other Only	2	0.2
English or Urdu and Other	45	5
Transliterated	607	67.4
Monocodal Biscriptal	102	11.3
Monoscriptal Bicodal	229	25.4
Official	86	9.56
Private	814	90.44

Table 5.1 also indicates that there are very few Multilingual signs (1.4 %) despite the fact that Peshawar is

home to a large number of Pashto and Hindko speakers (Census 2017), and English and Urdu operate as the official languages, making Peshawar an officially multilingual city. Even in the bilingual category, the dominant languages are English and Urdu (16.7 %), with a negligible appearance of Pashto (0.4 % & 1 %) and absolutely no appearance of Hindko. The largest indigenous languages of the city have been completely overshadowed by English, Urdu and Other languages.

The fact that most of the signs are in English and Urdu and 90.44 % of the signs have a private source suggests that there is no resistance to the official policy as far as the landscape is concerned: the LL is replete with languages officially enforced and privately endorsed. But whether the pro-official language policy of people is the result of a 'coercive consent' or pragmatism will be discussed in the light of public opinion in the next section.

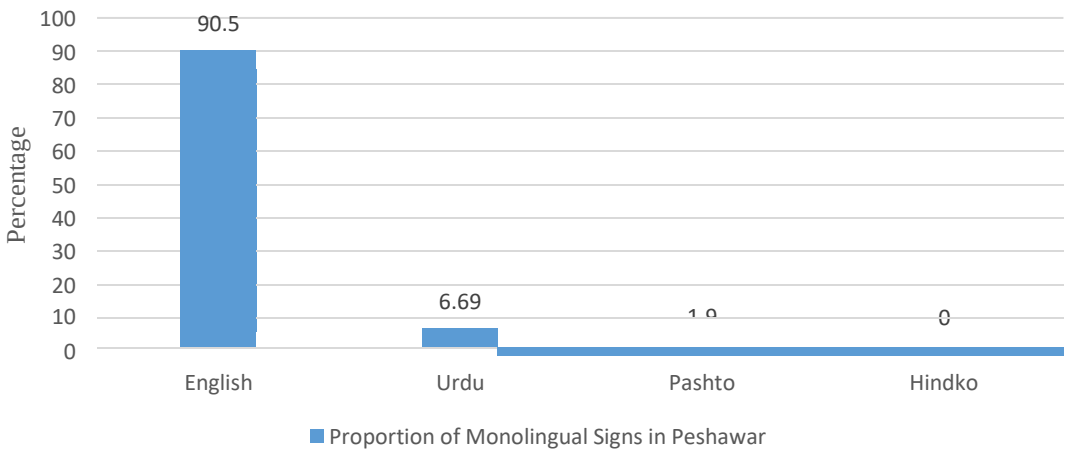
The tabular data shows that there are 254 are monolingual English, Urdu, and Pashto signs. English represents 90.5 %, Urdu 6.69 %, and Pashto1.9 % of these monolingual signs. English clearly stands out as the most important monolingual language of the city while Urdu lists second but gets very low representation in this category. The top-most vernacular of Peshawar, Pashto, is a rarity, a language highly under-represented; and the second largest vernacular of Peshawar, Hindko, stands completely unrepresented in this as well as other categories. The bigger appearance of English Only signs may be explained as a mark of trendiness, modernity, globalization, 'officialisation', authorization, and classiness since most of these signs are found in the posh and urban areas, or on official buildings as several studies in the field of LL suggest (Manan & Hajar, 2022; Sabaté-Dalmau, 2022; Carr, 2017; Shohamy, et al., 2010; Gorter, 2006). On the contrary, the low appearance of Urdu and Pashto only signs, and the non-appearance of Hindko, relegate these languages to the linguistic representation of the middle and lower classes. Figures 5-1, 5-2, and 5-3 show images with monolingual signs from posh, urban, and rural locations, suggesting the symbolic significance of the three languages: English is associated with the upper class (Hussain et al., 2022), Urdu with the middle class, and Pashto with the lower class. This is not to claim that this pattern is representative of all English, Urdu, and Pashto signs.

Figure 5-1. An English Sign from a Posh Area

Figure 5-2. An Urdu Sign from an Urban Area

Figure 5-3. A Pashto Sign from a Rural Area

Figure 5-4



We found that English usually features on signs related to official public services, officially installed street signs, national and international food chains, restaurants, hotels and cafés, bakery, garments and tailoring shops, footwear brands, perfume stores, expensive private healthcare and education facilities, filling stations, showrooms (dealing in cars, electronic appliances, and furniture), salons, stationers, marketing services, wedding halls, and superstores. In the monolingual category, Urdu is found on small businesses such as slaughterhouses, poultry shops, cooking services, traditional homeopathic medicine services and stores, small retail stores, private notices and warnings, seminaries and mosques, inns, and small cheap food and drink services. The scope of the Urdu script, however, is very broad since it is heavily used in transliterated signs, particularly, as a script for majority of the middle class businesses and advertisements (Hussain et al., 2022).

The 86 official public signs in Table 5.1 confirm the official authority and recognition of English and Urdu. In the official signage, 59 contain English, 48 Urdu, and 4 Pashto signs. English emerges as the undisputed dominant language, securing a dominant status; Urdu, despite the constitutional backing of the state, is placed in the middle seat; and Pashto, despite its vernacular status is placed in the rear seat. The top-down signs are a measure of a state's language policy (Ben Said, 2010). In Peshawar, the publicly displayed official signs betoken the official authority invested in the English and Urdu languages; and the lack or absence of official attention that Pashto and Hindko receive is emblematic of the official negligence that the two languages suffer from.

While the mythical one-nation version of Pakistan is based on the notion of Urdu, this, however, is problematic since Pakistan is not a nation-state like the modern European nation-states which are ethnolinguistically, more or less, homogeneous. Pakistan has a vast variety of languages and ethnic groups that necessitate the celebration of the diversity that makes Pakistan a federation (Khan 2016; Ayres, 2009). Language policy and planning in Pakistan has been wishful and whimsical rather than pragmatic which has resulted in ethnolinguistic and political tensions (Alam, 1991). This exclusivist approach is dangerous for the political health of the federation. Forcibly feeding Urdu to the ethnolinguistically diverse people of Pakistan can cause political trouble and may leave the majority languages malnourished. The abundance of Urduisation and absence of Pashto and Hindko in the LL of Peshawar index the linguistic disequilibrium caused by promoting Urdu as the 'national language,' under the assumption that Pakistan is

inhabited by one nation. This policy has put the vitality of the local languages, sometimes majority languages such as Pashto, in question and in danger. Even if this language policy is not enforced, its impact is so heavy that it has caused the exclusion of a language spoken by 90.17 % people of the city. Hence, we may legitimately wonder about the linguistic sanitization of Peshawar and exclusion of Pashto and Hindko and whether this happens as a result of a conscious effort on the part of the state and the subjects. The state has framed laws and policies that do not encourage the growth of languages other than English and Urdu.

3. Perceptions about Signage and Representation

Both public and private signs in Peshawar are overwhelmingly either in English, Urdu, or else transliterations of English into the Urdu script (See Table 5.1). Contrary to the invisibility of Pashto and Hindko in the LL, the census held in 2017 declares Pashto (90.17 %) and Hindko (5.3 %) as majority languages of the city, with only 1.95 % people reporting Urdu as their mother tongue, and none of the citizens declaring English as their first language or second language (Ibid). In this section we are going to explore what the public in Peshawar say about the signs on display and their representational dimension.

Nineteen out of 21 people interviewed categorically stated that the signs and signboards in Peshawar do not represent the local population since Pashto and Hindko are almost completely invisible on public signs on buildings, shops, roads, streets, and billboards. This invisibility of the local languages is tantamount to the negation of people's representation. The two people who did not categorically label the signage as non-representative also stated that majority of the population is unrepresented; however, they explained their responses to support their claims that the signage is not entirely unrepresentative. A 28-year-old waiter who considered the signs uncharacteristic of the sociolinguistic realities of the city, argued that the signs present a linguistically alienated city.

No sir, these [signs and languages] are not representative because some are written one way and some another way. Everything here is strange; there is neither Pashto nor Hindko. Different languages have been used here; that is, other languages [other than Pashto and Hindko] have been used for sign-writing.

Another respondent, a lecturer at a university, explained the idea of linguistic representation as a broader phenomenon, with wider implications, having to do with culture, collective memory, social structures, and expectations. Language, culture, and identity are inextricably related phenomena for this participant.

If we put people's representation this way that [it is] people's collective memory which language brings along, then it is not representative. People's language and their culture, that I consider synonymous, provide a base for their history and their society's structure, their collective desires and expectations. It's like a [collective] ownership and treasure.

Explaining his argument further, he cited the historical lineage of people living in Peshawar city as Pashto and Hindko speakers. He lamented the absence of the local languages, stating that he does not remember the use of these vernaculars on signs apart from some recently placed signboards on retail stores such as 'store' (ہلورنځاے), and 'Everything Store' (هر شے ستور), and a couple of restaurants such as 'Flavours' (خوندونه) and 'Pulses Sugar' (دال چيني). Commenting on these rare and recent signs in the local language, this respondent argued that this placement of Pashto signs is due to the influence of social media and to some extent of Pashtun nationalism.

It is evident from these and other responses that there is a great deal of pessimism about the representative

capacity of the languages of signs in Peshawar city. For most of the respondents, the LL does not indicate the local people and their languages at all. Indeed, some of the participants are of the opinion that the signs are not written to be representative of the population but framed and placed with a pure mercantile point of view; the owners of businesses and consumers have little to do with the cultural and representational dimensions of languages. One of the participants, a painter and publisher, derogatively calls the signage in Peshawar as a smearing of walls: "walls are littered with writings and smudges" (دیوالونه ئای دک کړي لړلي ئای دي).

A vegetables dealer, while commenting on the issue of representation, responded that he had found the signs written either in English or in Urdu but was not sure as to whether the languages of the signs speak for the people or not: "I don't know whether these [languages] are representative or not" (زه نه پوهېږم چې دا د دي خلکو ژمانۍدګي کوي که نه). Although his response does not clearly state the relationship between the sort of signage one comes across and its signification of people's identity, it does suggest the absence or rarity of signage in the local languages.

One of the participants, an assistant professor at a university, opined that the signage is partly representative of the people. She held that the Anglicized and Urduized landscape of Peshawar represents the literate population of the city whereas the illiterate people are not fully represented. Further, she considered Urdu as a language that binds and brings heterogeneous people together, so it is somewhat indicative and representative of the local populace. Seeing Urdu as a marker of the wider national identity, this response coincides with and endorses the policy statements regarding national and official languages. The state's denial or fear of multiple national identities and languages is expressed in its emphasis on Urdu as the sole national language, an argument he seems to subscribe to. In a similar vein, an Urdu speaker, a university student and part-time pharmacist, declared the signs of the city as unrepresentative for the dominance of English instead of Urdu. He was of the opinion that Urdu represents the local people but it is not prioritized on signs. When asked to explain his view of representation, he responded that Urdu is sparsely used and interspersed with English words.

There are signs in Urdu but you cannot call those a complete sentence. They do not represent our Urdu. (Participant S)

The outlook of two Hindko speakers was found different from the rest of the participants. They annexed an explanation to their responses as to why the local languages are scarcely represented, arguing that the local languages are spoken but not written by many people and that English and Urdu are easier to write and understand. These claims may be true about Hindko but such a claim about Pashto, an international language, is disputable. Both the interviewees, however, concluded that the languages on signs are not indexical of Peshawarites. This is suggestive of a linguistic alienation of the people.

Responses to the question of representation could be divided into three categories: nineteen participants (90 %) declared the languages of signage as unindexical and unrepresentative of Peshawar's ethnolinguistic population. Moreover, both Pashtuns as well as Hindkis perceived the public signage as uncharacteristic of the city. The following chart (Figure 6.1) explains the percentage of these responses. These public perceptions confirm our tentative hypothesis about the lack of representation and marginalization of the local people and languages. From this sense of linguistic deprivation and underrepresentation we may infer that there is a tension in the air about the linguistic landscape of Peshawar: what people wish to see on signboards is at odds with what is on display.

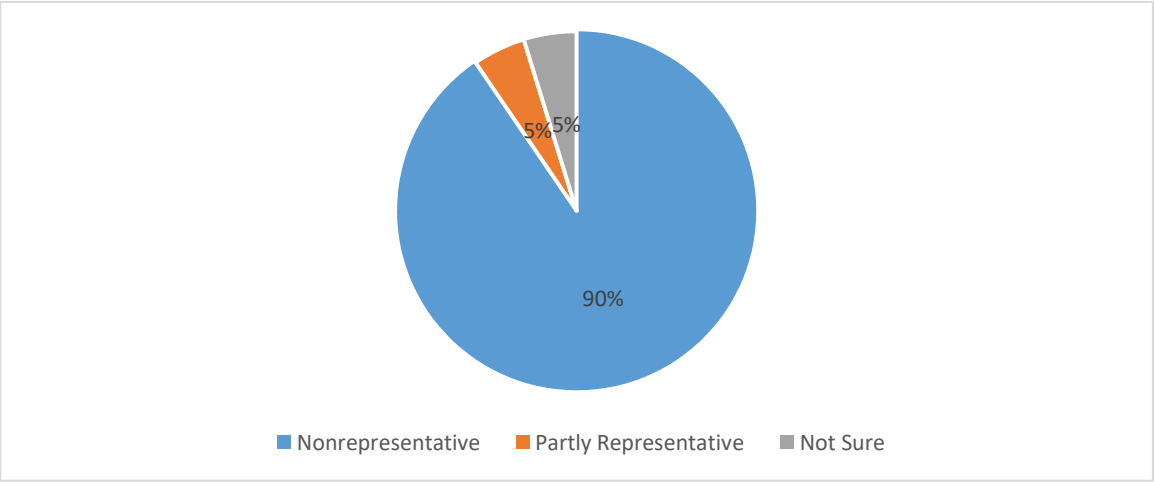


Figure 6-1. Public Perceptions about Representation

4. Perceptions about Language and Identity

Here we probe the question of identity in relation to language in a more direct way based on the responses of the people interviewed and the reasons they provided for whether or not language is a matter of identity. All the participants declared a person's mother tongue as an unmistakable source of identity, and all of them reported that language is treated as an index of a person's social and economic status, schooling, and family background.

The first respondent, a waiter in a small restaurant, defined language as a powerful symbol of identity, adding that people are confused about his identity when they come to his restaurant: "I have written Urdu [on the signboard], so people call me Hazarwal [where people speak Urdu and Hindko]; some call me a Punjabi; people are not sure about my identity"(ما اردو لیکل کړي زو خلک راشي رانه وائي هزاري وال یې څوک رانه وائي پنجابے یې څوک رانه څه وائي.څوک رانه څه وائي).

Although all the participants acknowledged the relationship of language and identity, some explained this issue at length and lamented the lack of regard people exhibit toward their mother tongues. A teacher asserted that "as far as identity is concerned, it [language] is very important; a national identity is absolutely impossible without a language" (څو چې د شناخت خبره ده دا خو بېخي مهم څېز دے. لکه یو قومي شناخت د ژبې نه بغېر ممکنه نه ده.). Another teacher Participant L) highlighted that language is not just a matter of identity, it signifies the "culture" (ثقافت) and background we belong to. A Hindko-speaking informant (Participant N) held that "every human has a personal connection with his/her language; no language pleases a person the way speaking one's own language does" (ہر انسان اپنی زبان سے شخصی طور پر وابستہ ہو تا ہے اس کو اپنی زبان میں جو لطف آتا ہے گفتگو کر نے کا دوسرے زبان میں نہیں آ تا ہے).

Do the responses to this question and the statistics of the LL suggest an identity crisis? The opinions of participants and signage vividly speak of an identity crisis. For if the public perceptions confirm that there is a strong relation between language and identity, Peshawar seems to have lost it since Pashto is a rarity and Hindko is absent from the LL of the city. This crisis is also highlighted by perceptions in response to the first question of our interview (See Figure 6-1). The city is wearing a weird identity then: it has the official and national languages of Pakistan scribed all over it but its local voices are completely muted. Figure 7-1 presents how respondents locate the questions of

identity and status in language.

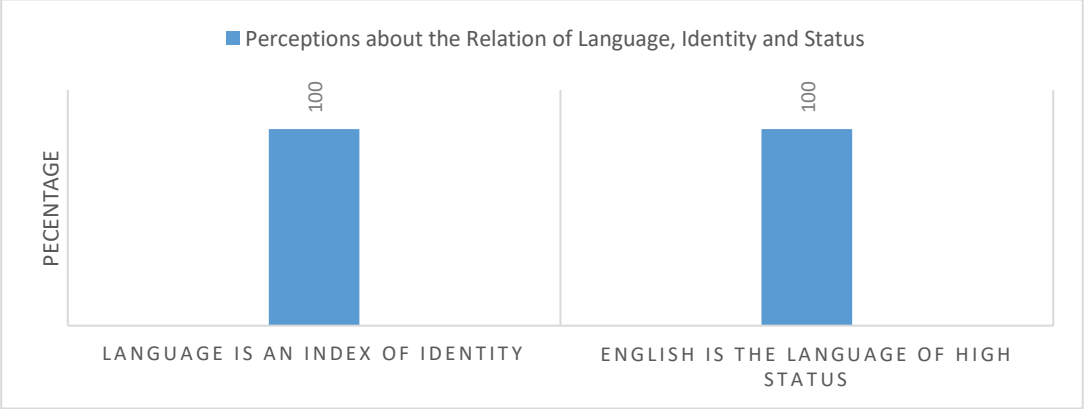


Figure 7-1. Perceptions about Language Identity and Status

CONCLUSION

This study explored the linguistic landscape of Peshawar, public perceptions, and policy documents to inquire into questions of ethnolinguistic identity and representation. The signage, public voices and behaviours as well as the policy documents suggest the hegemonic presence of English and Urdu, the two state-sponsored languages. Participants do recognize these two languages as the dominant languages of signs in the landscape as well as the multiple factors causing this: the authority of the state invested in English and Urdu through language and education policies; the global and local power, prestige, and status that English invoke; the role of market and economic incentives that English and Urdu provide; the borrowed prestige of the Urduized forms of English; the production of a unique and mythical Pakistani nation through the projects of Urdu and Urduization, making Urdu a lingua franca for the citizens; and the cold attitude of the state toward local languages. A vast majority consider the official and the national languages as unrepresentative of the people, asking for an inclusion of the two vernaculars of Peshawar in the LL as well as the priority list of the state. In view of the signage and public voices, Peshawarites seem to be facing an alienation and otherisation indexed by the absence of their languages in the landscape. The citizens desire that their mother tongues be adequately represented on public signs, a place that is currently occupied by English and Urdu.

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