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Artículos

## INVESTIGATING THE CLASH OF DISCOURSES ON LINGUISTIC HUMAN RIGHTS: FOCUS ON THE PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN SINDH, PAKISTAN

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## INVESTIGANDO EL CHOQUE DE DISCURSOS SOBRE LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS LINGÜÍSTICOS: LAS ESCUELAS PRIVADAS DE SINDH, PAKISTÁN

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## Abstract

This study investigates the clashing discourses of linguistic human rights in Pakistan's multilingual Sindh province, where Sindhis are the majority, and English, Urdu, and Sindhi are used as official languages. The Sindhi language activists want Sindhi to be used as the medium of instruction for the first five formative years of education, while many Sindhi parents want their children to be taught in English. Such diverging demands have caused the clash of discourses on linguistic human rights in Sindh. Therefore, by conducting semi-structured interviews of 20 participants, this study investigates why Sindhi language activists and parents hold different views of what constitutes language human rights. Findings demonstrate that the Sindhi language activists' conceptualization of linguistic human rights emphasizes cultural heritage, ethnic consciousness, and linguistic unity. In contrast, the Sindhi parents' conceptualization of linguistic human rights focuses on upward social mobility, prestige, and linguistic domination.

**Keywords:** *Clash; discourses; linguistic human rights; Pakistan; Sindhi.*

## Resumen

Este estudio investiga los discursos enfrentados de los derechos humanos lingüísticos en la provincia plurilingüe pakistaní de Sindh, donde los sindhis son mayoría y se utilizan el inglés, el urdu y el sindhi como lenguas oficiales. Los activistas de la lengua sindhi quieren que el sindhi se utilice como medio de instrucción durante los cinco primeros años formativos de la educación, mientras que muchos padres sindhi quieren que a sus hijos se les enseñe en inglés. Estas demandas divergentes han provocado el choque de discursos sobre los derechos humanos lingüísticos en Sindh. Por lo tanto, mediante la realización de entrevistas semiestructuradas a 20 participantes, este estudio investiga por qué los activistas de la lengua sindhi y los padres tienen puntos de vista diferentes sobre lo que constituyen los derechos humanos lingüísticos. Los resultados demuestran que la conceptualización de los derechos humanos lingüísticos por parte de los activistas de la lengua sindhi hace hincapié en el patrimonio cultural, la conciencia étnica y la unidad lingüística. En cambio, la conceptualización de los derechos humanos lingüísticos de los padres sindhi se centra en la movilidad social ascendente, el prestigio y la dominación lingüística.

**Palabras clave:** *Choque; discursos; derechos humanos lingüísticos; Pakistán; sindhi.*

## I. INTRODUCCIÓN

Sindh is a province in Pakistan, alongside Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the Punjab. The total recorded population of Sindh is 47.9 million, and its area is 140 914 square kilometers (Population Welfare Department, n.d.). Language groups such as Sindhis, the Urdu speaking community, Seraikis, Baluchis, Pashtuns, Punjabis, and others live in Sindh (Ali et al., 2021).

Sindhis are the majority living in the province (Underrepresented Nations & People's Organizations, 2022). After the separation of the Indian subcontinent (Pakistan and India) in 1947, many Muhajirs (Urdu-speaking Muslim immigrants) came from India to Sindh (Ahmar, 1996). Moreover, the US-led War on Terror in Afghanistan and military operations against Rohingya in Myanmar brought many refugees to Sindh (Rehman, 2021). Such refugee influx has changed the demographic reality of the province, giving impetus to politics of languages and activism for language rights (Ali & David, 2021a).

Urdu and English were made the national and official languages of Pakistan in 1956 respectively. Moreover, Urdu was used as a medium of instruction in schools (Asif et al., 2020). Such a top-down policy relegated the Sindhi language in Sindh to a peripheral place (Rahman, 1995). However, the use of Urdu as a medium of instruction in schools was seen as a threat by the Sindhis towards their language, and they launched a movement for their language rights. Ibrahim Joyo, a Sindhi activist, argues that:

In Sind, Sindhi-medium children read Urdu compulsorily from class IV to class XII. The Urdu medium children have not to read Sindhi correspondingly. This imposes inequality of burdens, inequality of opportunity, and social and cultural inferiority on the Sindhi-speaking children and is the greatest discrimination against a free people in a free country (cited in Rahman, 1995, p. 29).

The Sindhi-Urdu controversy resurfaced in 1972, when *The Sindhi Language Bill* was passed by the Provincial Assembly of Sindh making Sindhi the province's official language. This policy was opposed by the Urdu-speaking Muhajirs who saw it as a threat to their language and identity (Ali & David, 2021a). The discourse on language rights then hinged upon Sindhi identity and Muhajir identity.

In 2019, Pakistan People's Party government in Sindh passed a resolution calling for the teaching of the Sindhi language as a compulsory subject in all Sindh's private schools (Samar, 2019). Although this resolution recommended teaching the Sindhi language, some private schools in the region do not view the language positively and strictly prohibit its use. Such schools allow either Urdu as a part of a nation-building project or English to

facilitate upward social mobility. English is mainly used in elite private schools in Pakistan, and their fees are higher, while Urdu is used as a medium of instruction in so-called English medium, lower middle-class private schools (Manan et al., 2014).

Traditionally, there have been three kinds of discourses on language rights in Sindh. The first type of discourse either calls for Sindhi as a medium of instruction (Gopang et al., 2020), or Urdu as a medium of instruction (Qadri, 2021). Another type of discourse espoused by the upper and lower middle-class Sindhi parents corresponds to the neoliberal reality and supports English medium private schools (Channa, 2014). Such diverging preferences have caused the clash of discourses on linguistic human rights in the Larkana district in Sindh.

This study investigates how Sindhi parents and Sindhi language activists differ in their conceptualization of language rights. Contextualizing the Sindhi language activists' discourse on language rights to the top-down mother tongue-based policy recommendation of the United Nations, this study examines how Sindhi parents' discourse on language rights clashes with the discourse of the language activists, and how the parents' bottom-up language policy demands impact the micro language policy in private schools in Sindh.

### **1.1. Literature Review**

Previous research reported that there is no conflict in various types of linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012). However, this study demonstrates why and how the clash of discourses on language human rights occurs in Sindh and how such a conflict can be mediated. Although earlier researchers related the macro-language policy to the medium of instruction controversy in Sindh (Rahman, 1997), none of the previous studies discussed how micro-language policy in private schools is informed by the discourse on language human rights, and how such a policy can result in a conflict on the medium of instruction. Previous research conventionally associated English as a medium of instruction with a top-down policy approach (Channa et al., 2020; Manan et al., 2014; Ali & David, 2021a), however, using participants' (Sindhi parents) responses, this study contends such a position is taken towards English as a medium of instruction and shows how this stance represents a bottom-up policy approach. According to David (2021), a bottom-up language policy approach considers and includes the preferences of parents and students when deciding the medium of instruction.

Language human rights or linguistic human rights protect a person's or a group's right to use their language or languages in the private and public domains (Minority Rights Group International, 2020). They involve the right to speak one's own language

in legal, judicial, and administrative acts and contexts, the right to get an education in one's own language, and the right for media to be on air in one's own language (Minority Rights Group International, 2020). Linguistic human rights include language rights that are fundamental for a dignified life and their protection against violations (Paz, 2014). These rights are necessary for maintaining linguistic diversity, which is as necessary as biodiversity for the existence of the planet Earth (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1998). Given the importance of linguistic human rights, many declarations, charters, and conventions have been passed. These are now discussed.

Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights enables minority communities to use their language in different contexts:

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language (United Nations, 1976).

Moreover, Article 2 of Universal Declarations of Human Rights states that:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (United Nations, 1948).

Linguistic human rights can either be negative/non-discriminatory or positive/affirmative. Negative rights prevent discrimination based on language, whereas positive rights which include affirmative obligations enable a minority community to use its language (Max van Der Stoel, 1999). Positive rights are necessary because «pure non-discrimination norm could have the effect of forcing indigenous/tribal peoples and minorities (hereafter ITMs) to assimilate to a majority language, effectively denying them their rights to identity» (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012, p. 1).

In her qualitative review, Skutnabb-Kangas (2012) argues that linguistic human rights can be discussed from an instrumental perspective, looking at languages as communication instruments or markers of identity. According to her, linguistic human rights can also either be individual (see Article 30 of the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child* [United Nations, 1989] and the UN *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities* [United Nations, 1992]) or collective (see

*The UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous People* [United Nations, 2007] and Council of Europe's *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* [Council of Europe, 1995]). Furthermore, linguistic human rights may be personal (a person having such rights anywhere in a country he/she lives) or territorial (people have language rights only in those cantons where a language has been officialized).

Language policy and planning determine whether to give/not to give everybody linguistic human rights. Grin (2000, p. 7) describes language policy as:

A systematic, rational, theory-based effort at the societal level to modify the linguistic environment with a view to increasing aggregate welfare. It is typically conducted by official bodies or their surrogates and aimed at part or all of the population living under their jurisdiction.

However, such an organization-centric definition excludes the role of language activists and parents in impacting language policy in different contexts.

In 2008 Skutnabb-Kangas and McCarty expanded the scope of language policy as a:

Sociocultural process that includes official acts and documents as well as everyday language practices that express normative claims about legitimate and illegitimate language forms and uses, and have implications for status, rights, roles, functions, and access to languages and varieties within a given polity, organization, or institution; the scholarly study of how decisions about language are formulated and implemented, often considered a subset of language planning (Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty, 2008, p. 9).

Language policy and planning also takes place in many daily actions when people select which language to speak to whom and when (Lo Bianco, 2010). In fact, Rannut (2009) argues that technological planning is often initially a bottom-up work, particularly for minority languages.

It is therefore essential to look at Language Policy and Planning as both top-down and bottom-up, as a «multilayered sociocultural process - complex modes of human interaction, negotiation, and production, mediated by relations of power [...] to illuminate crosscutting themes of cultural conflict and negotiation, identity, ideology, and linguistic human rights» (McCarty et al., 2009, p. 280).

In fact, Baldauf and Kaplan (2005) explain that language policy and planning take place on three levels: the macro level, the meso-level, and the micro level. Macro-level

language policy involves governmental activity of determining and delineating language use in broader social, official, and educational domains (Liddicoat, 2020). Micro-level language planning includes business organizations, educational institutions, or other organizations that decide which language(s) to use (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2005). Language planning and language policy making that occurs between the micro-level and the macro-level is called the meso-level (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2005). Macro language policies in Pakistan, such as the National Education Policy (Ministry of Education of Pakistan, 2009) and the Single National Curriculum (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training of Pakistan, 2020), and in Sindh, such as the Sindhi Language Bill (Sindh Assembly, 1972), contain provisions that allow the promotion of the Sindhi language in educational, official, and socio-cultural contexts. However, such language policy provisions are only on paper because micro-level policy in private schools in Sindh encourages either English or Urdu (Pathan et al., 2018).

Many researchers have studied teachers' and students' preferences for the medium of instruction in Sindh's context (Channa, 2014; Gopang et al., 2020; Mukhtar et al., 2021), however, none of the studies discussed how and why the administrative preferences in private schools (micro-language policy) are informed by the parental discourse on language human rights. Using qualitative and quantitative methods of research, Channa (2014) revealed that government teachers in private schools in Sindh prefer English as a medium of instruction. Contrarily, in their quantitative study, Gopang et al. (2020) focused on students' preferences of the medium of instruction and demonstrated that students like to be taught in their mother tongue (Sindhi). Unlike Channa (2014) and Gopang et al. (2020), Mukhtar et al. (2021) demonstrated that students can learn science subjects better when the medium of instruction is English.

Some researchers have investigated bottom-up and top-down language policy approaches in Sindh's context (Channa et al., 2020; Durrani, 2012; Ali, 2020). These researchers conventionally related the top-down language policy with Urdu or English as a medium of instruction in Sindh and Pakistan, and how such a policy is negatively affecting the academic development and socio-cognitive progress of students. Ali and David (2021a) used a historical institutionalism approach to study the ways top-down language policies have been politicized and how such policies are resulting in language activism in Sindh and Pakistan. Ali and David (2021b) suggest a mother-tongue-based multilingual education model to protect Sindh's and Pakistan's multilingual diversity.

Research on micro-language policies has also demonstrated how prohibiting and penalizing the use of students' ethnic languages can negatively affect their academic and socio-cognitive performance (Hurwitz & Kambel, 2020; Rutu Foundation, 2020;

Cunningham, 2018). According to Hurwitz and Kambel (2020), prohibiting children from speaking their home language can render negative social and emotional effects on them. Such prohibition results from the imposers' fear that the use of home languages in schools can pose challenges to a dominant group (Cunningham, 2018).

Language Policy and Planning at the micro-level (in private schools in Sindh) must consider the different types of discourses on the medium of instruction and language human rights. It should discuss parents' preferences and language activists' concerns and mediate the policy-making process. The mediation of parental discourse and the discourse of Sindhi language activists can, to some extent, clarify and bring some reason to the controversial issue of whose language rights are being emphasized.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study used phenomenological research design because it aims to investigate a phenomenon, the clash of discourses on linguistic human rights, through an exploration of its detailed description (Flick, 2022). It also used the purposive sampling technique of data collection to select the participants who experienced the clash (the principle of ease of access was followed in this selection). The research project was conducted in the context of district Larkana, Sindh.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted in the Sindhi language and manually transcribed and translated into English for analysis. Open-ended questions were sent to the participants via WhatsApp. Due to the new wave of Omicron in Sindh, interviews were conducted via WhatsApp voice notes. Participants were asked questions such as «In which language do you want your children to learn?», «Why do you want your children to learn in that language?», or «What do language human rights mean for you?».

Ten Sindhi parents (5 males and 5 females) whose children attend private schools in Larkana participated in this study. The parents were educated (held Masters's degrees), spoke Sindhi as a first language with their children at home, and could speak English and Urdu. The participants' average age was 46, and they belonged to the middle socio-economic class, which was determined from their annual income (around forty thousand US dollars). They worked in both the public and private sectors.

In addition to the parents, ten Sindhi language activists (6 males and 4 females) affiliated with political groups engaged in language activism also shared their views through WhatsApp. Their average age was 32, they were graduates and could speak Sindhi as a first language, Urdu, and English. The participants' consent was sought before conducting the interviews, and they were ensured that their names would not



be mentioned in the study. In total, twenty interviews were conducted over two weeks (with an average of 24 minutes per interview). The translation of these interviews was verified by a bilingual speaker.

The translated interviews were then analyzed. The participants' preferences for the medium of instruction (henceforward, MOI) in private schools in Larkana were codified when identifying patterns and themes and used as criteria to develop categories such as «Cultural heritage», «upward social mobility», «consciousness», «prestige», «linguistic unity», and «linguistic domination», which were the main topics that emerged from their responses. The audit trial of the data was conducted by presenting the research results in tables. The thematic analysis of the data showed why the clash of discourses on linguistic human rights occurred.

### 3. RESULTS

In this section, findings regarding the clash of discourses on linguistic human rights are presented around three central themes: cultural heritage versus upward social mobility, ethnic consciousness versus prestige, and linguistic unity versus linguistic domination.

#### 3.1. Cultural Heritage versus Upward Social Mobility

According to the interviews, the Sindhi language activists want private schools to teach in Sindhi to Sindhi students during the first five years of education. In contrast, Sindhi parents want private schools to teach their children in English during these early years. The reasons behind such demands are shown in Table 1.

Responses in Table 1 demonstrate how activists and parents view their respective linguistic human rights. Mother tongue-based education (in Sindhi) is seen as a child's linguistic human right because it is believed to preserve and impart children's/students' culture (see response 1 in Table 1). In contrast, Participant 4 (a parent) identifies linguistic human rights with teaching and learning in English because the participant claims that English is the language of research and knowledge that can help children access quality education and good jobs. The concept of linguistic human rights shared by Participant 1 is influenced by the desire to protect and transmit Sindhi culture, whereas Participant's 4 ideas of linguistic human rights are affected by the desire for quality education and good jobs. Such diverging desires and priorities have caused the clash of discourses on linguistic human rights in the Larkana district of Sindh.

Participant 2, an activist, considers using Sindhi MOI as a linguistic human right because it can facilitate cultural proximity (by making learning culturally relevant) and ensure ease of learning for Sindhi students in private schools. Contrarily, Participant 5,

**Table 1. Cultural Heritage vs. Upward Social Mobility**

Participant no.	Response	Activist/ Parent	Theme
1	We are supporting the demand of teaching children in their mother tongue. We support the demand that Sindhi students in private schools should be taught in the Sindhi language. It is their right. Teaching in Sindhi can help preserve Sindhi culture and impart Sindhi traditions to Sindhi students.	Activist	Cultural heritage
2	Sindhi language should be used as a medium of instruction in private schools for teaching Sindhi students. The students can better understand what they learn because their cultural proximity to their mother tongue as a medium of instruction makes learning easier.	Activist	Cultural heritage makes learning easier
3	I want private schools to teach Sindhi students in the Sindhi language because this can preserve Sindhi norms, values, and folklore.	Activist	Cultural heritage
4	Compared to Sindhi, English has produced more knowledge and research. It is the language of knowledge and research and therefore well qualified to be used as a medium of instruction and communication in private schools. Children should first learn this language and only then can they be successful in getting quality education and good jobs.	Parent	Upward social mobility
5	Learning in English and teaching in English can help my children to get good jobs and earn sufficient money to live a successful life. And it's every one's right to be successful. These opportunities are offered in English medium private schools, and therefore I send my children there.	Parent	Upward social mobility
6	To be a successful professional, one must have a good command of English, because this can provide a ladder for upward social mobility. My children deserve good quality education imparted via English. I think private schools do give us such a ladder.	Parent	Upward social mobility

a parent, favors English MOI because the participant asserts that it can lead to success, getting good jobs, and earning sufficient money. These responses demonstrate how discourses on linguistic human rights in Sindh are motivated by different persuasions (cultural inspirations and economic opportunities) and how such discourses clash in the context of private schools in Sindh.

The Sindhi language activists demand linguistic human rights (Sindhi as a MOI in private schools in Sindh) based on the premise that teaching and learning in Sindhi can prevent the disappearance of Sindhi cultural heritage in private schools and protect Sindhi norms, values, and folklore (see the response of Participant 3). Participant 3, for instance, sees Sindhi as a tool to safeguard and propagate Sindhi cultural heritage. Such protection is considered necessary because it can maintain linguistic diversity, which is as important as biodiversity (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1998). Unlike the language activists, Sindhi parents want upward social mobility and see English as a ladder to facilitate such mobility because they claim that quality education and professional success can be achieved when English is used as a MOI (see the response of Participant 6).

### 3.2. Ethnic Consciousness versus Prestige

The Sindhi language activists link linguistic human rights with the ethnic consciousness that can be developed by teaching in Sindhi in private schools. Contrarily, Sindhi parents associate linguistic human rights with social prestige/respect. For details, see Table 2.

**Table 2. Ethnic Consciousness vs. Prestige**

Participant no.	Response	Activist/Parent	Theme
7	As you know, teaching students in their mother tongue is their linguistic right. Similarly, teaching Sindhi students in private schools using the Sindhi language is our demand that we have been advocating for. I believe that teaching in Sindhi can make students aware of their identity and language rights.	Activist	Identity and Ethnic consciousness
8	Teaching in Sindhi is our right and the administration of the private schools in Sindh must understand this fact. I support this right and struggle for it because teaching in Sindhi can increase our consciousness of our ethnic identity and make us feel proud of it.	Activist	Identity and Ethnic consciousness
9	Teaching and learning in Sindhi makes students feel proud of their ethnicity because they feel that their linguistic rights are respected and recognized in private schools, and that their language is developed enough to be used as a MOI.	Activist	Identity and Ethnic consciousness

10	Teaching in English and being able to fluently converse in English are what I and my son desire. I believe it's my son's right to learn a language that he likes, and which can help him earn social respect and admiration. I think the English medium private schools respects his desire and language right.	Parent	English language brings respect -Prestige
11	Learning, teaching, and speaking in English are equated with social respect and prestige. That's why many English medium private schools in Sindh are positively viewed. It's my children's right to gain social respect and recognition.	Parent	English language brings respect - -Prestige
12	I decided to send my two children (one son and one daughter) to a private English medium school so that they can learn English and earn respect and admiration.	Parent	English language brings respect -Prestige

Responses in Table 2 demonstrate how discourses on linguistic human rights clash in the context of private schools in Larkana (Sindh). The discourse of Sindhi language activists draws on the theme of ethnic consciousness, while the discourse of Sindhi parents draws on the theme of prestige/social respect. Sindhi MOI is seen as a linguistic human right because it can ignite ethnic consciousness in Sindhi students and preserve their ethnic identity (see response 7). Such ethnic consciousness can result in the movement for language rights (Ali & David, 2021a). In contrast, Participant 10 (parent) states that the system of linguistic human rights must address the likes and desires of parents and their children. For this participant, linguistic human rights include the freedom of teaching and learning English because achieving fluency in English can help his son achieve what Manan et al. (2014) call social respect and admiration.

Participants 8 and 9 (activists) demand, support, and struggle for the use of the Sindhi language as a MOI in private schools. They believe that attaining such a linguistic human right can create ethnic consciousness and feelings of pride among Sindhi students because they will feel that their language is developed enough to be used as a MOI in private schools. In contrast, Participants 11 and 12 (parents) support English as a MOI because it helps students in gaining social recognition and respect. According to Participant 11, the use of English as a MOI also helps developing a positive image of private schools. For the activists, making students aware of their ethnic identity constitutes an important component of the system of linguistic human rights, while for the parents ensuring social respect is paramount.

### 3.3. Linguistic Unity versus Linguistic Domination

For the Sindhi language activists, linguistic human rights include achieving ethnic unity through teaching the Sindhi language in private schools in Sindh. In contrast, linguistic domination is perceived as a linguistic human right by Sindhi parents. The participants' responses are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Linguistic Unity vs. Linguistic Domination**

Participant no.	Response	Activist/ Parent	Theme
13	If we teach all Sindhi students in the Sindhi language even in the private schools at least during the primary years, which is every child's universal right to learn in his/her mother tongue, I think we will manage to reduce social division through linguistic unity.	Activist	Linguistic unity
14	Teaching in English in private schools and teaching in Sindhi in government schools have divided our Sindhi society. One can bridge this gap by using the Sindhi language in private schools and be able to create linguistic unity.	Activist	Linguistic unity
15	Being linguistically united means being politically united. Therefore, all Sindhis must show linguistic unity by sending their children to such schools where Sindhi is the medium of instruction. Learning in their mother tongue is every Sindhi child's right.	Activist	Linguistic unity
16	English is a sign of power. Speaking and writing good English can give us supremacy over those who do not know English or have its poor understanding. This is the reason my children go to English medium private schools.	Parent	Social and Linguistic domination
17	If my children can speak good English, they can dominate educationally and socially. I decided to send them to the English medium private school so that they can enjoy the right of social domination.	Parent	Social and Linguistic domination
18	In Sindh, English is considered as a language of power, and I think my children should also learn this if they wish to get and exercise power. Gaining and preserving power is a right that can be achieved by having a good command and understanding of the English language.	Parent	Social and Linguistic domination

The clash of discourses on linguistic human rights also occurs between the proponents of linguistic unity (activists) and the supporters of linguistic domination (parents).

Using Sindhi as MOI for Sindhi students is their universal right that can create linguistic unity and reduce social division. This shows how the discourse on language human rights relates to the discourse on linguistic and social unity. In contrast, Participant 16 (a parent) sees speaking and writing good English as a linguistic human right which she claims by sending her children to English medium private schools in Larkana, Sindh.

According to Participant 14 (an activist), the use of two different media of instruction in Larkana (Sindhi in government schools and English in private schools) has created social divisions. Rich parents send their children to English medium schools, while poor parents send their children to Sindhi/Urdu medium schools (Manan et al., 2014). The participant recommends that these social divisions can be reduced through linguistic unity, which can be achieved by universalizing the right for every Sindhi child to learn in his/her mother tongue. In contrast, Participant 17 (a parent) believes that linguistic domination results in social and educational domination, and sees linguistic domination as an essential component of the system of linguistic human rights. This domination can be achieved by teaching and learning in English.

Mentioned as a component of the system of linguistic human rights, linguistic unity is equated with political unity (see the response of Participant 15). According to Participant 15 (an activist), such unity can be established if Sindhi parents send their children to Sindhi medium schools. Unlike Participant 15, Participant 18 (a parent) identifies preserving and gaining power by mastering English in private schools as a linguistic human right. Thus, the discourses on linguistic human rights differ based on diverging priorities.

The clash of discourses on linguistic human rights on the basis of culture and upward social mobility, ethnic consciousness and prestige, and linguistic unity and linguistic domination can be mediated by taking certain measures. The mutual trust between activists and parents should be fostered by holding policy-based dialogues, meetings, and conferences that discuss and focus on the widening of the scope of linguistic human rights in Sindh's context. Before rushing policies at the micro or even the macro-level, stakeholders must consider the priorities and concerns of both activists and parents.

Language activists should realize that language policy and planning at the micro-level in private schools in Sindh corresponds with Sindhi parents' and Sindhi students' preferences and desires. Therefore, this process of policy formulation should not be considered a top-down approach but a bottom-up one that caters to the needs and wants of Sindhi parents and their children. Parents should also understand the concerns of the Sindhi language activists and support their demands of accommodating some space for the Sindhi language as a medium of instruction in private schools.

The clash of discourses and the medium of instruction controversy in Sindh can be mediated through the use of translanguaging. Many researchers (Ali, 2021; Li & Exley, 2019; Seals, 2021) have already shown how this approach can help in fostering linguistic justice, successful learning, sociocultural equality, and linguistic accommodation. Translanguaging by allowing the use of both languages (Sindhi and English) can address the concerns of both the activists and the parents. Therefore, it can mediate the clash of discourses on linguistic human rights in Sindh's context.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

This study discusses how the Sindhi language activists' discourse on linguistic human rights is impacted by the theme of cultural heritage. The analysis shows how cultural heritage (preserved through Sindhi as a MOI) is perceived by them as an essential component of the system of linguistic human rights whereas parents identified upward social mobility (through English as a MOI in private schools) as an essential factor. Unlike other findings (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012) that reported the lack of conflict between linguistic human rights, our findings demonstrate the existence of a clash of discourses on linguistic human rights in the context of the private schools in Sindh.

As linguistic human rights are necessary for a language group, it is clear that the participants also wanted to assert their rights to develop ethnic consciousness (activists) and achieve social respect/prestige (parents). The participants differed in their conceptualization of linguistic human rights and how such rights can be achieved by introducing a particular language as a medium of instruction (Sindhi or English). Unlike previous research (Rahman, 1997) that had discussed how language policy and planning at the macro-level could result in the medium of instruction controversy, our research focuses on how micro-language policy in private schools can result in differing views on the languages that are used as the medium of instruction.

Findings on the clash of discourses on linguistic human rights further demonstrated how activists perceive linguistic unity as a right, while for parents it is linguistic domination. Such different perceptions can widen the gap between the proponents of Sindhi as a MOI (activists) and the supporters of English as a MOI (parents). Unlike other research (Channa et al., 2020) that conventionally associated officialization and the use of English as a MOI with a top-down language policy approach, by focusing on parents' preferences our study linked the use of English as a MOI in private schools with a bottom-up language policy approach.

This study explores the clash of discourses between parents and activists in relation to linguistic human rights, a divide that can be discussed and negotiated, and hopefully

result in a comprehensive, integrated system of linguistic human rights in Sindh. The «agency of parents to insist on English as a medium of instruction» (David, 2021) as they see English as social capital for their children must not be ignored.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the clash of discourses on linguistic human rights in the context of private schools in Larkana, Sindh, using twenty semi-structured interviews. The activists' responses demonstrated how they conceptualize culture, ethnic consciousness, and linguistic unity as essential components of the system of linguistic human rights. In contrast, parents emphasized the importance of elements such as upward social mobility, prestige, and linguistic domination.

We suggest that this clash of discourses can be reduced by taking confidence-building measures and using translanguaging in private schools, without forgetting about parents, whose voices must be heard. In Pakistan, the colonial legacy has led English to be seen as a *prestige* language and Urdu as a *national* language, so there is an attitudinal shift towards these languages: parents who can afford the expenses of private schooling tend to send their children to schools where the option of English as a MOI exists. Ultimately, parents consider that their children will be upwardly mobile with a language that empowers them.

This study used a small sample of participants taken from one district in Sindh (Larkana). However, a much larger sample from different districts in Sindh should be studied to determine if similar results emerge. Future research should also include the voices of students, teachers, and principals in relation to the choice of the medium of instruction.

This research expands policymakers' and linguistic rights activists' understanding of how the clash of discourses on linguistic human rights can occur. Its bottom-up approach to the teaching of English and the use of English as a MOI in private schools in Sindh sheds a new light on the issue of linguistic human rights in Sindh, as seen by activists and parents. And, in doing so, we hope it will pave the way for future research on how clashes of discourses on linguistic human rights occur in different contexts and how they can be mediated.

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