

Colonial Roots of Education: A Postcolonial Analysis in Context of Pakistan and Malaysia

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Abstract: This study investigates the enduring influence of British colonial education policies on contemporary schooling systems in Pakistan and Malaysia, with a focus on language policy and postcolonial identity. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Antonio Gramsci, Paulo Freire, and Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o, the paper explores how colonial legacies have entrenched linguistic hierarchies and sustained social inequalities. English continues to dominate as the language of instruction in elite institutions and digital education platforms, reinforcing class divisions and marginalizing indigenous languages. A key contribution of this study lies in its critical analysis of how digital education—often viewed as a democratizing tool—reproduces colonial language ideologies and epistemic hierarchies. The research employs qualitative methods, including policy analysis and thematic review of educational frameworks, to examine how digital platforms in both countries privilege English-medium instruction, disadvantaging non-elite learners and reinforcing linguistic imperialism. The paper argues for a more equitable and de-colonial approach to language-in-education policy by proposing reforms such as multilingual digital platforms, translanguaging pedagogy, and the integration of indigenous knowledge systems into curricula. These recommendations aim to support culturally responsive and socially inclusive education systems in postcolonial contexts. The findings contribute to critical language policy discourse by highlighting the intersection between colonial legacies, language ideology, and digital education in shaping access and identity.

Keywords: Colonial Education, Postcolonial Theory, Educational Disparities, Digital Linguistic Imperialism, Pakistan, Malaysia.

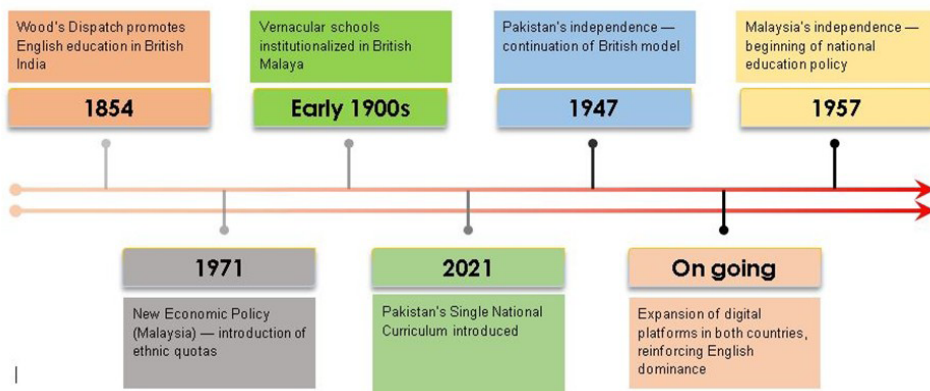
1. Introduction

Education has always been a source of empowerment as well as a source of control. Neocolonial educational systems in postcolonial societies like Pakistan and Malaysia have instilled irredeemable linguistic, epistemological and identification ghettos. The British colonial rule also promoted a set of policies which laid greater emphasis on English as the language of power followed by the indigenous knowledge system and language. These legacies continue to define modern-day education systems and propagate class separations, linguistic gatekeeping as well as lack of cultural-specific continuity. The British policy of education in India and elsewhere departed on the dualist method: Western knowledge and English learning was introduced to the high-society in the urban areas whereas vernacular and religious education was either outsourced or decentralized. wa Thiong'o (1986) agrees that this use of foreign languages suspended the continuity of the indigenous cultures and created the unwanted alienation of intellectuals. Both in Malaysia and Pakistan, despite such attempts, English continues to be the criterion of educational achievement and upward mobility (Haidar & Fang, 2019; Rahman, 2016).

The system of education in Malaysia portrays the process of ethnic stratification that was established during colonization. During British rule, local schools that taught the Malay, Chinese and Tamil students separately, were institutionalized and segregated, establishing parallel systems in which resources and opportunities towards upward mobility existed unequally. Although, Bahasa Malaysia was introduced as a national language of learning after independence, English lingers on as a dominant language of learning at the higher education and internationally oriented sectors (Gill, 2013) (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013). Such duality makes it difficult to unite the Malaysian identity by the means of language policy. Pakistan has another and no less complicated situation. The existence of private schools offering English as medium of learning, public schools offering Urdu as the medium and religious madrasas is one such example of a disintegrated system that was a legacy of colonialists.

The colonial educational systems marginalized the old Islamic learning but encouraged English to be used as the language of the administration and maturity (Rahman, 2004). The theory of cultural hegemony put forward by Gramsci (1971) is especially helpful in this respect, as it shows how the impact of dominant ideologies based on the elite education is reaffirming social inequalities by controlling the production of knowledge. What has been ignored in past analyses is the magnitude to which these legacies of the colonialism are being reproduced in the digital era. New complexions of linguistic imperialism that Phillipson (1992) describes are emergent with the growths in the dependence on online learning platforms, particularly in the age of pandemic education reform. TeleSchool and eLearn Punjab in Pakistan or DELIMA in Malaysia, are platforms that are very dependent on the English content, especially in STEM subjects. Not only does this serve to further entrench pre-existing linguistic hierarchies, it also serves to create digital stratification- where the mere ability to connect up may no longer be sufficient to receive access to quality education via the internet: language competency may still be a prerequisite. Therefore, the present study is aimed at exploring the impact of the British colonial school policies in Pakistan and Malaysia on the existing school systems, language stratifications and socio-cultural outcomes. It even tells the story of how digital learning space is not a neutral or inclusive space rather a space that reinserts colonial thinking in the name of being innovative.

Figure 1: Timeline of Colonial to Postcolonial Educational Policy Shifts.



Based on the journal articles by Freire (1970), Gramsci (1971) and wa Thiong'o (1986), this paper turns to the postcolonial theory to understand how colonial power structure can be maintained in education and present possible ways of linguistic and pedagogic decolonization.

1.1. Gap and Contribution in Research

Although the preceding research has addressed the colonial roots of schooling in Pakistan and Malaysia, not much of the research effort has been directed toward studying the mechanism through which virtual schooling reinforces the colonial-era language hierarchies. The present paper can offer original contributions as it examines the challenging phenomenon of postcolonial theory, language policy, and digital learning in educational contexts, more specifically, the way the English-language hegemony in digital learning environments reproduces the preexisting social hierarchies. This paper presents new paradigm to decolonize language use at the policy and pedagogical levels in modern curricular systems by proposing corresponding reform notions.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The research contributes to the field of postcolonial studies by providing a complex account of both the remains of colonialism in schooling. The study reveals the existing disparities of access to education and also related language policies and educational content guidelines that could be used to demonstrate the required changes that education establishments should make in order to become more inclusive.

1.3. The Legacy of Colonialism in Education

In the colonial era, education was discovered as a prominent medium of population control and formation of local elites in order to assist the colonial system. The powers had formed education systems during their colonial reign to determine local elitist groups that would assist in administration of their policies. The colonial system of education is as well suited to the description of the banking model of education by Freire (1970) since students were only expected to take what was taught without any involvement. The systems of learning also focused on rote learning rather than critical thinking so as to keep the colonial subjects loyal to the dominant ideologies that existed in power. This trend was also observed within the history of the British-ruled Malaysia, such that the British colonial rule in Malaysia introduced various ethnic schooling systems that formed various educational spaces. The country had several educational systems that were modified to several Malay, Chinese and the Tamil speaking community and the initial study that was taught in English was restricted to only the upper contemporary students. Ethnic segregation of learning institutions led to the formation of a long-term social division that has been shaping the Malaysian civilization (Cheah, 2002). Again, in Pakistan, the British educational policies created the school system in Pakistan which was solely aimed at harvesting colonial clerks and bureaucrats. The westernized method wiped out local Islamic education with an entry of a western teaching program concentrating on teaching of English languages as a main method of instructions. The colonial culture was in conflict with the Islamic culture resulting in the two secular and

religious education systems adopted in Pakistan (Rahman, 2004). Such structures represented what Gramsci referred to, as cultural hegemony; a mechanism that propagates colonial thinking into the education process.

2. Literature Review

The literature review focuses on the review of historical documents, scholarly publications, and policy reports whose analysis links the colonial origins of education in Pakistan and Malaysia. It puts the effects of British colonial policies, post-colonial education reformations and the challenges of the structures, which still exist, attempting to heal both nations into perspective.

2.1. *Historical Foundations of Colonial Education (Pakistan)*

The administration system that was developed during the British colonial rule developed an education system that produced clerks and bureaucrats, but no free thinker. Woods Dispatch of 1854 came up with English instruction and devalued the English, Arabic, Persian, and native languages (Rahman, 2004). Missionary schools significantly contributed to spreading western education, marginalizing traditional form of Islamic education (Alavi, 1972). Consequently, English turned into a currency of social and economic privilege, which has led to a divide between the classes that can only be discerned today (Haider, 2019).

2.2. *Malaysia*

The ethnic system of schooling that was introduced by the British colonial government in Malaysia strengthened the social gap. Malay, Chinese and Tamil were taught segregated schools and only the best of the students were taught English (Cheah, 2002). This practice formally solidified ethnic division and caused a historical discrepancy in the opportunities of access to education and economy. Although the arguing in Malaysia has not only been supportive of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language in the post-independence polity, there is further structure of structural viability to complete the undoing of the Mexican colonization process ensued in higher learning (Darmi & Albion 2013).

2.3. *Postcolonial Theories and Educational Hegemony*

2.3.1. *The Role of Colonial Discourse in Education*

Postcolonial theorists claim that the education system left by the colonizers was meant to reinforce western domination of culture and language. wa Thiong'o (1986) brings out the devaluation of the indigenous languages and substitution by English which alienated the students to their cultural background. Gramsci (1971) theory of cultural hegemony describes the use of education to keep the elite in control, a move that made sure that the Western ways of knowing had an upper hand. The critiques of colonial education using the banking model of education were provided by Freire (1970), who approached the education system that treated students as object of knowledge and not subjects of knowledge.

2.4. Contemporary Educational Policies and Colonial Legacies

2.4.1. Pakistan

The Pakistani system of education persists in dividing between the English speaking high school privately run, Urdu speaking publicly run and the madrasas, which perpetuate the class and language based inequality (Gill, 2013). To streamline the system, the Single National Curriculum (SNC) (2021) (Government of Pakistan, 2021) was implemented, however critics suggest that this fails to address grander issues of inequalities at the structural level (Shamim, 2011). The university education is still dominated by the English so only elite students have opportunities (Haidar, 2019).

2.4.2. Malaysia

The national education policy has been so oriented to enforcing Bahasa Malaysia as a unifying language yet English is still needed in tertiary education and in business affairs (Gill, 2013). Educational affirmative actions based on ethnicity as established under the New Economic Policy (1971) (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013) are seen to have generated differences between the non- Malays (Lee, 2012). These inequalities are addressed in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013, 2025).

2.5. Challenges and Future Directions

- a) **Decolonization of Education:** The process of decolonizing education in Pakistan and Malaysia remains fraught with complexity. Both nations face the challenge of reconciling national language promotion with the demands of global competitiveness. Pakistan's introduction of the Single National Curriculum and Malaysia's use of Bahasa Malaysia in public education represent efforts to assert postcolonial national identity (Government of Pakistan, 2021; Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013). However, English continues to dominate in higher education, international assessments, and professional sectors (Gill, 2013; Haidar & Fang, 2019). This reliance on English reflects what Phillipson (1992) defines as *linguistic imperialism*—the privileging of English to the detriment of local languages. As a result, attempts at decolonization remain largely symbolic, and education systems continue to reinforce Western-oriented epistemologies rather than promoting truly indigenous models of knowledge production.
- b) **Linguistic and Social Inequalities:** Language-based educational access in both countries mirrors deep-rooted socio-economic divides. English fluency is still seen as a passport to higher education, upward mobility, and global recognition (Haidar, 2019; Rahman, 2011). Students from elite, English-speaking families are more likely to succeed, while those educated in Urdu, Bahasa Malaysia, or regional languages face structural disadvantages. Even with language policy reforms, the material and ideological dominance of English persists (Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992). For instance, in Pakistan, regional language speakers are often excluded from digital learning platforms that deliver content mainly in English (Chari, 2024). This linguistic hierarchy reproduces colonial-era class distinctions and contributes to systemic educational inequities (Rahman, 2004). True equity requires addressing not only the medium of instruction but also the

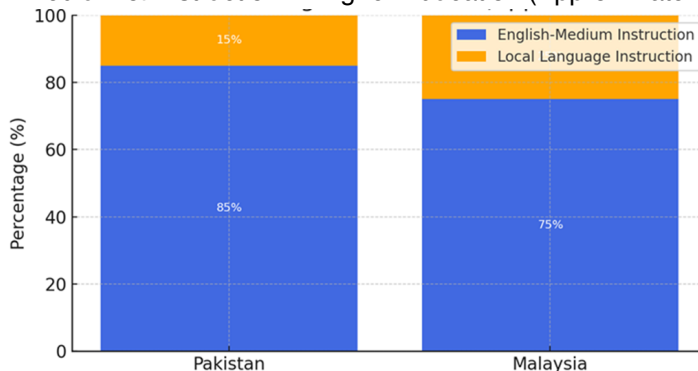
- broader power dynamics embedded in language policy.
- c) Reforming Curriculum and Pedagogy:** Despite reforms in both countries, pedagogy remains largely rooted in rote memorization rather than critical thinking or learner autonomy. Freire's (1970) critique of the "banking model" remains highly relevant: students are treated as passive recipients of state-sanctioned knowledge rather than as active participants in meaning-making. In Pakistan, although the Single National Curriculum was launched to unify public and private schooling, it continues to emphasize uniform textbooks and exam preparation (Shamim, 2011; Government of Pakistan, 2021). In Malaysia, although policy shifts aim to develop critical and creative thinking through initiatives like the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013–2025), practical classroom change is often limited by resource constraints and teacher preparedness (Lee, 2022). Without transformative reforms that incorporate indigenous pedagogies and dialogical methods, both systems risk reinforcing colonial legacies through their teaching approaches.

In this literature review, one emphasizes the contribution of colonial policies of education that significantly created modern differences between Pakistan and Malaysia. Although the two countries have tried to decolonize, structural disparities still are experienced in language policies, curriculum structure, including social accessibility and so on. Future studies would center on identifying other models, which would combine indigenous knowledge systems and promote equal education.

2.6. Digital Linguistic Hierarchies and the Reproduction of Colonial Language Policies

Digitalization of education and its modernization are frequently applauded especially in Pakistan and Malaysia as a source of innovation and fairness. Yet, under this development there is a more insidious replication of medieval colonial language ideologies. TeleSchool and eLearn Punjab in Pakistan, Open Learning Malaysia and DELIMa (Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia) are platforms that require a substantial use of English-based resources in STEM areas. Although these mediums are supposed to increase people and their access to education, they unintentionally favor those who have the skills and knowledge of English language, which is mostly the students of elite and urban origins, leaving the ones who speak other languages (that are also regional), at a disadvantage, particularly, the students in the rural and regional parts of the world. This is a manifestation of an extension of what was earlier coined as linguistic imperialism by Phillipson (1992), which essentially presupposes a system of domination by English along with the local linguistic identity. This is dominance with an ideological background of the past of colonization in the postcolonial context. Consequently, the digital learning process turns into an instrument of epistemic colonization since it preserves the global Northern knowledge structures and undermines local knowledge and languages. Also, these websites rarely have effective options such as speaking different languages and the importance of contextualizing different data with regards to culture. The majority of course contents, user faces, and tests are English-focused. This brings in a language hierarchy in which English language speakers are synonymous with quality learning, technological literacy, and social mobility. What it produces is a digital separation with a basis not on the level of infrastructure, but language ideology.

Figure 2: Medium of Instruction in Higher Education (Approximate Distribution).



Digital education programs should reconsider its language policy in order to realize linguistic justice. Promoting the creation of content in local languages, adapting to translanguaging strategies, or getting the local teachers involved in the development of digital curricula are some key measures against reinstating the colonial legacies. Digital education can make the current disparities all the worse without this deliberate reform.

2.6.1. Language and Digital Stratification

Digital education frequently privileges English as the default medium of instruction. In both Pakistan and Malaysia, government platforms such as TeleSchool, eLearn Punjab, and OpenLearning Malaysia emphasize English content in science, mathematics, and technology disciplines. This reproduces the linguistic hierarchy initiated by colonial education systems, where fluency in English became synonymous with academic and economic mobility (Chari, 2024; Rahman, 2011). As a result, students from non-elite, Urdu- or Bahasa-speaking backgrounds are disadvantaged in accessing digital learning materials, reinforcing socioeconomic stratification.

2.6.2. Epistemic Colonialism in Online Curriculum

Many global e-learning platforms like Coursera and edX continue to propagate Western epistemologies, marginalizing indigenous knowledge systems and regional histories (Freire, 1970; wa Thiong’o, 1986). In this context, digital colonialism—the dominance of Western digital content and structures—operates as a modern extension of historical cultural hegemony (Tankosić et al., 2024). Students encounter curricula and interfaces that rarely reflect their local cultures, further alienating them from their socio-cultural identities.

2.6.3. Opportunities for Decolonial Resistance

Despite these challenges, digital tools can serve as platforms for resistance and decolonial innovation. For example, regional YouTube channels and local-language e-learning initiatives in Pakistan have enabled marginalized voices to access and produce content in native languages. In Malaysia, bilingual and multicultural digital modules have been integrated into secondary education to promote linguistic equity

(Gill, 2013). Freire's notion of critical pedagogy finds application in interactive platforms that encourage learners to question, engage, and localize knowledge instead of passively consuming it (Freire, 1970).

While digital education holds promise, its current design and deployment often reflect colonial-era inequalities, particularly in language use and knowledge hierarchies. To move toward genuine educational decolonization, policies must foster inclusive digital ecosystems—supporting multilingual platforms, culturally relevant content, and participatory pedagogies. Without intentional reform, digital education risks reinforcing the very hierarchies it claims to dismantle.

3. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, which is most suitable for exploring complex social and cultural phenomena such as postcolonial identity crises and educational discourse in postcolonial contexts.

The following methods were employed to achieve the objectives of the study:

- a. **Literature Review:** A comprehensive review of existing historical documents, peer-reviewed academic research, and relevant policy papers was conducted. This provided a foundational understanding of postcolonial identity and education systems in the postcolonial context.
- b. **Thematic Analysis:** The thematic analysis explored key texts generated by Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci together with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. The research method allowed the researchers to detect prevalent educational concepts alongside ideological frameworks involved in identity formation after colonial rule.
- c. **Policy Analysis:** The analysis studied modern educational policies in Pakistan along with Malaysia in detail. The research evaluated postcolonial policies to determine their relationship with colonial pasts and their role in constructing national and cultural identities of modern postcolonial nations.

Each of these methods has been applied thoroughly to guarantee that the findings of this research are valid, contextually grounded, and replicable for future studies.

2.7. Comparative Analysis of Language Policy in Pakistan and Malaysia

Although the educational system in Pakistan and Malaysia was founded on British colonial legacies, their reaction towards linguistic hegemony has been approached intensively differently. The survival of the vernacular schools such as Malay, Chinese and Tamil has made the Malaysian educational system ethnically exclusive and linguistically diverse (Cheah, 2002). Bahasa Malaysia promotion has been a national language but English language has still dominated in post education and corporate plans and programs (Gill, 2013; Darmi & Albion 2013). The Malaysian treatment of bilingualism has been a case of semi-integrated endeavour to strike balance between its nationality and global opportunities as evident in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013). Pakistan is more disjointed in this regard. This social stratification is reproduced between the English-medium private schools, the Urdu-medium state schools, and the madrasas (Haidar & Fang, 2019; Rahman, 2004). With the Single National Curriculum (SNC) being an effort to streamline

teaching this is not applicable to elite educational facilities, which tend to be outside the framework (Government of Pakistan, 2021). Pakistan does not have an institutional approach towards multilingualism as seen in Malaysia and in most cases, the regional languages are marginalized whenever it comes to education planning (Rahman, 2011). Such a comparative approach depicts that similar legacy of colonialism is causing dissimilar results in the contemporary world. Ethnic and linguistic diversity in Malaysia is institutionally recognized, despite its wayward nature, both within and outside policies. Pakistan centralization moves, on the other hand, are more homogenizing and, in most instances, outcast other populace linguistic groups, which are non-elite. The two cases highlight the importance of such reforms that go beyond a language policy of symbols to ones that are more radical and involve structural inequalities.

4. Discussion

4.1. Analysis of Current Educational Policies in Pakistan and Malaysia

Both Pakistan and Malaysia maintain educational structures that retain elements of British colonial administration through language-related policies alongside curriculum structures and educational social structure. This section examines present-day educational policies of Pakistan and Malaysia to determine their approaches towards maintaining or eliminating colonial influences on the educational system.

4.2. Language Policy in Education

4.2.1. Pakistan

The debate between English and Urdu and on the regional languages are the key to the existence of the confrontation of the maximum level in the Pakistani system of education. Pakistan still enjoys the hierarchical order created during colonial rule since elite schools and institutions in their country still use English as the dominant language of instruction even in higher learning institutions (Gill, 2013). Public school education is done in Urdu however religion-based schools/institutions known as madrasas hold classes in Arabic or Persian thus increasing the level of linguistic disparities between schools and institutions (Shamim, 2011). Single National Curriculum (SNC) (2021) has created a uniform system of education that aims at integrating the Urdu-medium and English-medium students as stated by the Government of Pakistan (2021). The opponents argue that SNC co-exists with English as the dominant language in the fields of science and mathematics (Haider, 2019). Besides, the linguistic policies of Pakistan find it difficult to reconcile globalization with national identity. Though it is necessary to know the English language to attain economic mobility, the use of English-medium schooling puts Urdu and regional language students at a disadvantage (Gill, 2013). Consequently, the language policy has become an obstacle to equalizing education and still ensures that the language policy still talks about colonial series of stratification of society.

4.2.2. Malaysia

Since Malaysia, compared to Pakistan, has progressed further on the decolonization of its language policy, with Bahasa Malaysia as a language of the education and governance

(Gill, 2013). Malaysian government has done lots of work in making the national Bahasa Malaysia by promoting it in the schools so as to bring a sense of national unity and to depend less on English, especially in primary and secondary schools (Lee, 2012). Nevertheless, English still plays a major role in tertiary education and in such courses like engineering, medicine, and business, a lot of teaching is done in English to ensure that we are globally competitive (Darmi & Albion 2013). The Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013, 2025) as one of the major education reforms in Malaysia recognises the necessity of maintaining a balance between national identity and international interaction (2013).

Although the Bahasa Malaysia language is implemented as the primary medium of instruction, bilingual education models have also been incorporated, whereby the students have been kept competent with both Bahasa and English. However, prior segregation of ethnic stream educations in the colonial period such as Malay, Chinese and Tamil schools to date remains a problem when it comes to nation integration (Cheah, 2002).

Table 1: Comparison of Education Policy Features in Pakistan and Malaysia.

Aspect	Pakistan	Malaysia	Colonial Legacy Impact
Language Policy	Urdu and regional languages; English dominant in higher education	Bahasa Malaysia as official language; English in higher education	English as language of prestige and power
School Structure	Public, private (English), madrasa	Malay, Chinese, Tamil, English-medium schools	Fragmentation based on colonial stratification
Curriculum Reform	Single National Curriculum (SNC)	Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013–2025)	Continuity of Western content in core subjects
Digital Education	TeleSchool, eLearn Punjab	DELIMa, OpenLearning Malaysia	Primarily English-based platforms replicating hierarchies

4.3. Curriculum and Knowledge Production

4.3.1. Pakistan

The curriculum in Pakistan has been historically affected by the knowledge paradigms of Western countries that focus on rote learning and disregarded the native tradition of learning (Rahman, 2004). The curriculum generally focuses on the western scientific knowledge system at the expense of local traditions of knowledge and critical thinking (Rahman, 2004). Single National Curriculum (2021) was supposed to present one common curriculum throughout all schools, yet people are worried whether it will help to diminish inequalities of public, private, and madrasa school systems (2021).

In Pakistan, religious education is a major part of the curriculum and there are mandatory Islamic studies in state schools. Nevertheless, the Western systems of knowledge continue to dominate secular subjects with the same colonial-era separation occurring between religious and modern education (Gill, 2013). The opposition arises in the issue of bringing together these parallel streams so as to come up with a comprehensive education system that offers a combination of critical thinking and cultural identity.

4.3.2. Malaysia

The current curriculum in Malaysia has been extensively reformed to meet with the targeted development of the nation in maintaining the regional culture and history

therein (Lee, 2022). Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013, 2025) espouses a competency-based model and focuses on creativity and problem-solving skills, multilingualism (2013) But legal institutions of higher learning remain dominated by Western models of academic knowledge and especially in the scientific and technical fields (Gill, 2013). The existence of vernacular schools, Chinese, Tamil, and Malay medium schools is another distinguishing feature of Malaysia's education system (Raman and Sua, 2010). Although these schools serve members of particular ethnic groups, their critics point to the fact that they are doing the ethnic division, something that was left by British colonial rule (Cheah, 2002). The Malaysian government has made efforts to integrate these schools into a unified system through national curriculum reforms, but challenges persist in achieving true educational inclusivity.

4.4. Access and Social Stratification

4.4.1. Pakistan

In Pakistan, access to education is mostly based on the socio-economic background, where the top-notch elite schools subscribe to the western-based education (O/A Levels), and the schools announcing the underprivileged, face problems of old school material and lack of funding (Haidar, 2019). The concurring nature of madrasa education also complicates the environment by providing religious education that is not only independent of any mainstream curriculum (Gill, 2013). Policies in higher education still discriminate against students not speaking English and the policy changes made in the framework of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) have promoted wider access to higher education, still leaving huge gaps whose borders are between the rural and urban learners (2021), (Shamim, 2011).

4.4.2. Malaysia

Affirmative action policies in education are meant to benefit the Bumiputera (Malay and indigenous communities) and have created some controversy on the equality among the non-Malay students (Lee, 2012). Most recently, the New Economic Policy (1971) and Lee (2022) established quotas on the admission of Malay students to the institutions of higher education; this was quite understandably, attempted to rectify historical imbalances; however, it has been unpopular in non-Malay circles. British and American-based international schools form an elite education system, enforcing a socio-economic gap as found in the Pakistani system of private O/A Level education (Gill, 2013). The government has taken steps to control the education being given through the private institutions to avoid the threat of too much Western influence but equal access to education is nevertheless maintained (Darmi & Albion 2013).

4.5. Decolonization Efforts and Challenges

4.5.1. Pakistan

Colonial-era institution has created resistance to change in educational reforms in Pakistan (Gill, 2013). The promotion of the Urdu-medium education in the government schools is usually sabotaged by the economical and the social predominance of

the English (Haidar, 2019). Also, both religion-based and secular education are still polarized constraining the viability of wholesome reforms involving the incorporation of traditional and modern forms of knowledge systems (Shamim, 2011).

4.5.2. Malaysia

Malaysia has undergone more principal steps towards decolonization of language, although English is still a leading force in much higher education and commerce (Gill, 2013).

Ethnic-based education policies continue to create divisions, and vernacular schools maintain colonial-era segregation (Cheah, 2002). Despite government initiatives to integrate different education streams, cultural and political resistance has slowed progress (Darmi & Albion 2013).

4.6. Language Policy Implementation: Teachers' Role and Local Resistance

Educators have been quite central when it comes to interpretation, adoption and even opposition to state-imposed language policies. In Pakistan and Malaysia, decisions made in the classroom are frequently a combination of formal curricula and the slouching of lingual options. As an example, Malaysian urban teachers may alternately speak Bahasa Malaysia and English, increasing their understanding (Gill, 2013), whereas in Pakistan, public school teachers alternate between Urdu and English and regional languages to fill the linguistic gap (Shamim, 2011). Studies indicate that a lot of teachers are not ready to teach bilingual or multilingual students based on inefficient training and the shortage of resources. In Pakistan, there could be a pedagogical issue because English could be merely aspirational by the teacher, who is not fluent (Haidar, 2019).

In Malaysia, Bahasa Malaysia is prioritized in national policy, but nonetheless, English is common in science and technical teaching, and there are tensions between the policy and practice (Lee, 2012). The discreet opposition to state dictations by some teachers comes in the form of making mother tongue teaching the priority in lower classes or willing to use locally made resources to complement the deadening curriculums (Canagarajah, 1999). These localized episodes of local agency show the way in which teachers reveal the mediation of top-down policy in culturally diverse settings. These are some of the ground-level adaptations that should be noted to ensure that language education reforms are inclusive and decolonial, as is the case with most multilingual classrooms in place.

4.7. Towards Decolonization of the Linguistic World: Reform Proposals

Based on these findings, true reform should not just consider language choice, but should address the power system existing in the content of education, their delivery and availability. Below are suggestions that provide practical strategies of decolonizing education in postcolonial societies such as Pakistan and Malaysia.

- 1. Policy-Level Multilingualism:** The governments should require the creation and preparation of efficient educational resources both in analog and digital forms in the regional and indigenous languages.

2. **Critical Digital Pedagogy:** Engineers can teach educators a critical, decolonial pedagogy that reverses the top-down, Eurocentric systems of knowledge especially creating online content.
3. **Translanguaging Practices:** Promote linguistic flexibility in classrooms (in physical or online school) where students are provided with an opportunity to use several languages to better understand what is being studied.
4. **Indigenous Knowledge Integration:** Curriculum reform: Ensure indigenous epistemologies, oral traditions and local histories are included in any humanities and social sciences curriculum.
5. **Inclusive Technology Design:** Collaborate with linguistic communities to design user interfaces and AI tools (e.g., speech-to-text, translation apps) that support linguistic diversity.

Although such reforms are ambitious, they are crucial towards breaking colonial linguistic systems and promoting fair educational ecosystems.

5. Conclusion

As assessed in this paper, Pakistan and Malaysia still remain within colonial linguistic frameworks that have been further compounded by digitalized learning opportunities that place English as the language of power. Even with the reforms like Single National Curriculum in Pakistan and the Malaysia Education Blueprint, systemic inequalities exist. The decolonial approach should deal not only with curriculum and classroom activities but also with the language ideologies as they relate to digital education. Such journals as GEMA, which support applied linguistic justice, play an influential role in increasing research that contests against such hierarchies. It is only after multilingual, culturally based (and not just online) reforms that postcolonial countries can achieve an emancipator and normatively inclusive system of education. Education that is English-medium has dominated in Pakistan, which has been perpetuating social and economic statuses. To provide uniformity in the education system the Single National Curriculum (SNC) (2021) has been implemented but the gap between the top English-medium schools and government or Madrasa schools is significant (2021). Difficulty in integrating the religious and the secular education is still facing this challenge and this has continued with the dual education system that constrains quality learning (Gill, 2013). Although the English language opens the door to international interactions, it is also a hindrance to social advancement of those students who are trained in Urdu or local languages (Shamim, 2011). Decolonizing education has been more systematic in Malaysia, where Bahasa Malaysia replaced English as the language of instruction in an attempt to give national identity (Gill, 2013), although, this pattern is still perpetuated within the higher education and professional fields which are more English oriented resulting in linguistic inequalities (Lee, 2012). Attempts to impart bilingual education at the expense of these disparities are reflected in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013, 2025) to implement bilingual education but school system based on ethnicities still exhibits a colonial era pattern (2013). Moreover, affirmative action initiatives, including the New Economic Policy (1971), developed with the purpose of raising Malay and indigenous communities, have become the subject of the controversies concerning their fairness and inclusiveness

(Raman & Sua, 2010).

This study reveals that both Pakistan and Malaysia continue to operate within colonial linguistic paradigms, now exacerbated by digital education platforms that centralize English as the language of power. Despite reform efforts such as the Single National Curriculum in Pakistan and the Malaysia Education Blueprint, systemic inequalities persist. A decolonial approach must address not only the curriculum and classroom practices but also the language ideologies embedded in digital education. Journals like GEMA, which advocate for applied linguistic justice, have a crucial role in amplifying research that challenges such hierarchies. Only through multilingual, culturally grounded reforms—both offline and online—can postcolonial nations move toward a truly inclusive and emancipatory education system.

5.1. Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript. In addition, the ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancies have been completely observed by the authors

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