

Chapter 13

Translanguaging or English Monolanguaging?

Exploring Postsecondary Students' Perceptions of Linguistic Human Rights in Pakistan's Sindh Province

Ameer Ali

Government Arts and Commerce College, Larkano, Pakistan

Maya Khemlani David

University of Malaya, Malaysia

Shahnawaz Tunio

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3855-8045>

Government Arts and Commerce College, Larkano, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This study explores postsecondary students' perceptions of translanguaging and its nexus with linguistic human rights in Pakistan's Sindh province. English monolanguaging policy in higher educational institutions in Sindh has been seen as a ladder for upward social mobility. This monolingualism has posed challenges to linguistic diversity and linguistic human rights in the province (Sindh) that is multilingual. Interviews conducted via WhatsApp with postsecondary students in Sindh showed the popularity of translanguaging in contrast to English monolanguaging. Responses provided by participants were coded and qualitatively analyzed. Findings demonstrated how translanguaging could help provide and protect linguistic human rights.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-9029-7.ch013

INTRODUCTION

Sindh, a multilingual province in Pakistan, is home to the Sindhi language. Pakistan including all its provinces, such as Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh, was once a British colony, and the language of the colonial masters (i.e., English) was and has always been prioritized over the local languages.

Even today in Sindh and Pakistan, the English language is a tool of power, in the hands of linguistic gatekeepers and the dominant class (Ali & David, 2023). The role of the English language has been discussed by many researchers (Kachru, 1986; Quijano, 2000; Veronelli, 2015). English, as a colonial language, has replaced linguistic diversity in many formal, educational domains in the form of imposing monolingual hegemony, instilling raciolinguistic ideologies of White native speakerism or banning the use of L1 in English language classrooms in Sindh.

Currently, the field of linguistic human rights is contesting linguistic colonial legacy in a number of countries (Ali & David, 2023). 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, 2015). Linguistic human rights involve the right to speak one's own language in legal, judicial, and administrative sites, the right to get education in one's own language, and the right for media to be on air in one's own language (Minority Rights Group International, 2015).

Previous research has focused on individual and collective aspects of linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012). Looking at languages from an instrumental perspective, Skutnabb-Kangas (2012) defines languages as instruments of communication and markers of identity, and thus these are fundamental for a dignified life (Paz, 2014). Embedded in the area of linguistic human rights, this study postulates how access to linguistic human rights through translanguaging can be fundamental for a linguistically free, dignified life. Earlier studies have discussed how linguistic human rights can either prevent linguistic discrimination or affirm the use of L1 (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 1999), how language policy and planning provide access or very little or completely no access to linguistic human rights (Grin, 2000), how discourses on linguistic human rights are constructed in the global south and the global north (Paulsrud & Rosén, 2019), and how such discourses clash in the context of private schools in Pakistan's Sindh province (Ali & David, 2023). However, there is not much research conducted on how postsecondary students perceive translanguaging and how translanguaging can replace English monolingualing by instilling the ideology of linguistic human rights and linguistic emancipation in postsecondary English language teaching contexts in Sindh.

Literature Review

Translanguaging

The origin of translanguaging is traced to the Welsh bilingual education system (Lewis et. al., 2012). Cen Williams, a Welsh bilingual educationist, coined the Welsh term “trwasieithu” which translates into its English equivalent “translanguaging” (Conteh, 2019). Its purpose was to function as a cross-curricular strategy for the use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same classroom (Conteh, 2019). It is currently receiving much appraisal because it advocates learners' first language inside the classroom (Hall & Cook, 2012). Translanguaging is a pedagogical act of emancipation (Mbirimi-Hungwe, 2021) and it involves meshing of two or more than two languages while speaking or writing (Canagarajah,

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