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Linguistic (in)visibility in Islamabad's landscape: A nexus analysis of policies, practices and perceptions

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Abstract

The linguistic landscape (LL) in multilingual communities often reflects the complex relationship of language policies, practices, and people's perceptions of these policies and practices. This complex policy-practice-perception nexus leads to questions of linguistic inclusivity in contexts such as Pakistan. This study, therefore, attempted to find the nexus of spatial practices, language policies, and residents' perceptions of language use in the LL of Islamabad. To improve the structure of the highlighted sentence, it may be rewritten as: Data included a sample of 1213 pictures collected from Islamabad; text from the Pakistani constitution, parliamentary debates, and political talk shows; and three focus group discussions with the local residents. A nexus analysis of the data (Hult 2018) was carried out to see the extent of correspondence among the three data sets. The findings revealed that English, Urdu, and Arabic remain the most visible languages (respectively) in the LL of Islamabad, and the indigenous languages lack visibility. The macro-level language policies were also found to promote the three languages, deeming them necessary for the constitutional and ideological makeup of Pakistan. The residents, too, tended to favour the use of these languages in the LL of Islamabad, despite their demonstration of affection for their native languages. The findings of the study have serious implications for the Pakistani indigenous languages, and indicate a need for inclusive language policies and awareness initiatives to protect linguistic diversity in Pakistan.

Key words: *linguistic landscape, language policy, nexus analysis, multilingual communities, indigenous languages, Pakistan*

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Языковой ландшафт Исламабада: анализ взаимосвязи политики, практики и восприятия

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Аннотация

Языковой ландшафт (ЯЛ) в многоязычных сообществах часто отражает сложную взаимосвязь между языковой политикой, языковыми практиками и их восприятием населением, что ставит вопрос о языковой инклюзивности. В данной работе предпринята попытка выявить связь между представленностью языка в городском пространстве Исламабада, проводимой языковой политикой и восприятием жителями использования языка в ЯЛ. Материалом для исследования послужили: выборка из 1213 фотографий, сделанных в Исламабаде; тексты из конституции Пакистана, парламентских дебатов, политических ток-шоу и дискуссии, проведенные с тремя фокус-группами местных жителей. Полученные данные были проанализированы с помощью триадной модели ЯЛ Трампера-Хехта (Trumper-Hecht 2010). С целью определить степень их соответствия был проведен нексус-анализ (Hult 2018). Результаты показали, что наиболее заметными языками в ЯЛ Исламабада остаются английский, урду и арабский, в то время как коренные языки находятся на заднем плане. Языковая политика на макроуровне также содействует распространению этих трех языков, считая их необходимыми для конституционного и идеологического устройства Пакистана. Было выявлено, что местные жители, несмотря на их привязанность к своим родным языкам, также приветствуют использование этих трех языков в ЯЛ Исламабада. Результаты исследования имеют важное значение для коренных языков Пакистана и указывают на необходимость проведения инклюзивной языковой политики и просветительских мероприятий по защите языкового разнообразия.

Ключевые слова: *языковой ландшафт, языковая политика, нексус-анализ, многоязычные сообщества, коренные языки, Пакистан*

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1. Introduction

The current study explores the linguistic landscape (LL) of Islamabad from the perspectives of language policies and residents' perceptions of language use in public spaces. Islamabad is the federal capital of Pakistan. In terms of population composition, it is the most diverse metropolitan and multinational city in Pakistan, which shapes its linguistic landscape.

In a rich societal multilingual context like Pakistan, studying the linguistic landscape is important to understand concerns about language policies, spatial

practices, and the community's attitude towards language use in public spaces. Previous LL researchers (e.g. Hovens 2021, Motschanbacher 2024, Negro 2008, Yavari 2012) focused on the relationship between language policies and spatial practices. The interplay of policies, spatial practices, and residents' perceptions of spatial practices shaping the LL of a region, on the other hand, has received little scholarly attention. The current study addresses this gap by exploring the nexus of spatial practice, language policies, and residents' perceptions of language use in public spaces in Islamabad.

“Linguistic landscape” refers to the presence of instances of written language on billboards, signboards, shop signs, safety signs, road and street signs, and all other sorts of signs in public spaces. LL, a growing field of sociolinguistics and language policy and planning (e.g., Blommaert 2013, Landry & Bourhis 1997, Yelenevskaya & Fialkova 2017, among others), helps us to understand the social, cultural, and political structure of a society (Blommaert 2013). Thus, space becomes a primary concern in LL studies, and is considered a sociopolitical rather than a physical phenomenon. Importantly, LL is indexical as well as informational. It is indexical in the sense that it alludes to the presence (or absence) of a linguistic community in a particular space (Alomoush 2015, Landry & Bourhis 1997). LL is symbolic in the sense that it is a marker of sociolinguistic dynamism, marginalization, and the relative status and power of languages and their varieties (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy & Barni 2010).

Additionally, linguistic landscape is indexically and symbolically linked to language policies on the one side, and language perceptions on the other. LL reflects explicit and implicit language policies as well the language use within a given community (Hueber 2006, Negro 2008). LL studies (see, e.g., Backhaus 2007, Gorter 2006, Jaworski & Thurlow 2010, Shohamy & Gorter 2009) consider the visibility and invisibility of languages as an outcome of socio-historical and sociopolitical processes—policies and practices. Research studies in LL have explored various domains like language policy (e.g., Cenoz & Gorter 2006, Coluzzi 2009), language ideologies (e.g., Shohamy & Gorter 2009, Shohamy, Ben-Rafael & Barni 2010), globalization and linguistic dominance of English (e.g., Tan & Tan 2015), visibility and invisibility of indigenous languages (e.g., Amos 2017, Marten, Mensel & Gorter 2012), and the role of the visual environment in the discursive construction of multilingual settings.

The relative symbolic values of languages are obvious from the absence or presence of some languages in LL (Shohamy 2006) and contribute to shaping the sense of place in a city (Jaworski & Yeung 2010). Much of the LL research is conducted on the visual environment as a manifestation of historical impacts and contemporary language policies and practices (Pietikainen et al. 2010). Trumper-Hecht (2010), however, points to the lack of the local community voice as the missing link in the existing LL research, whereas Hult (2018) identifies the need for an analysis of the nexus of policies, processes, and practices for a true understanding of the language situation in a polity. This becomes more important

in metropolitan cities where the linguistic landscape is increasingly becoming multilingual, with minority languages vying for spaces, especially on private signage.

Introducing a triad theoretical model for LL studies, Trumper-Hecht (2010) argues that *spatial practice* (distribution of languages in linguistic landscape), *conceived space* (ideologies and beliefs contained in the views of policies and policymakers) and *lived space* (ordinary people's perceptions about language use in public spaces), are of equal importance when exploring linguistic landscapes. Adding to this, and drawing from Scollon and Scollon (2004), Hult (2018) proposes an analysis of the nexus between *discourses in place* (relationship among languages in the policy documents), *historical body* (people's beliefs and experiences of language use and *interactional order* (the use of language in linguistic landscape). The current study, therefore, taking Trumper-Hecht's (2010) theoretical stance and Hult's (2018) analytical stance on linguistic landscapes, aims to investigate the nexus between spatial practice (linguistic landscapes), language policy, and people's perceptions of language use in public spaces with a particular focus on the linguistic dominance of English and newly emerging languages (or their varieties) in the rich multicultural and multilingual context of Islamabad.

In the context of Pakistan, although LL research is not scarce, many studies overlook the crucial connection between LL practices and language policies. There is a scarcity of studies that examine the nexus among the three interconnected domains of LLs: policies, practices and perceptions. Furthermore, there is need for studies that provide a richer account of the dynamics of LLs in urban metropolitan cities, such as Islamabad. While English and Urdu are undoubtedly the dominant languages in the LL, it is important to explore the degree to which this dominance aligns with broader language policies and local perceptions. Additionally, it is worth investigating whether there are any emerging linguistic varieties or indigenous languages visible in the LL, and how such visibility connects (or disconnects) with policymaking and public perceptions.

The current study aims to explore spatial practice, language policy and residents' perception of language use in public spaces in Islamabad. To analyze the relationship among the three interconnected dimensions of the linguistic landscape, i.e. spatial practice, residents' perceptions, and language policy, we designed a qualitative exploratory research study, underpinned by an interpretivist epistemological paradigm (Lincoln & Guba 2003).

The research questions of the study are:

1. In what ways do language policies shape language use in the public spaces of Islamabad?
2. What are the perceptions of the local populace towards the choice of languages in spatial practices?
3. What are the (dis)connects across the practices-perceptions-policy nexus?

2. Theoretical and analytical frameworks

The theoretical framework for this study comes from Trumper-Hecht (2010), who identified the need to add a third dimension to the existing research on the linguistic landscape. Drawing from Lefebvre (1991), Trumper-Hecht (2010) presents three interrelated dimensions of space i.e., ‘spatial practice,’ ‘conceived space,’ and ‘lived space.’ According to Trumper-Hecht, spatial practice is the human action that takes place in physical space. Conceived space is the space conceptualized by powerful social groups including politicians, technocrats, policymakers, and planners. The third dimension, lived space, is the experiential dimension of space. Space is conceptualized and experienced by its inhabitants in the form of symbols displayed in the landscape. Following Lefebvre, LL as a ‘sociolinguistic-spatial phenomenon’ can be studied by observing these dimensions and the way they are connected. Spatial practice, i.e. physical dimension of space, is the presence or absence of languages on public signs and can be documented through a camera. Conceived space, i.e. political dimension, can be analyzed through the conceptualization and ideologies held by powerful social groups whose policies and planning shape the LL of a region. The third dimension, ‘lived space’ is experiential and can be examined through the experience with and perception of language use in linguistic landscape. In order to get a more comprehensive understanding of LL, exploration of all these dimensions and the way they are interconnected is required.

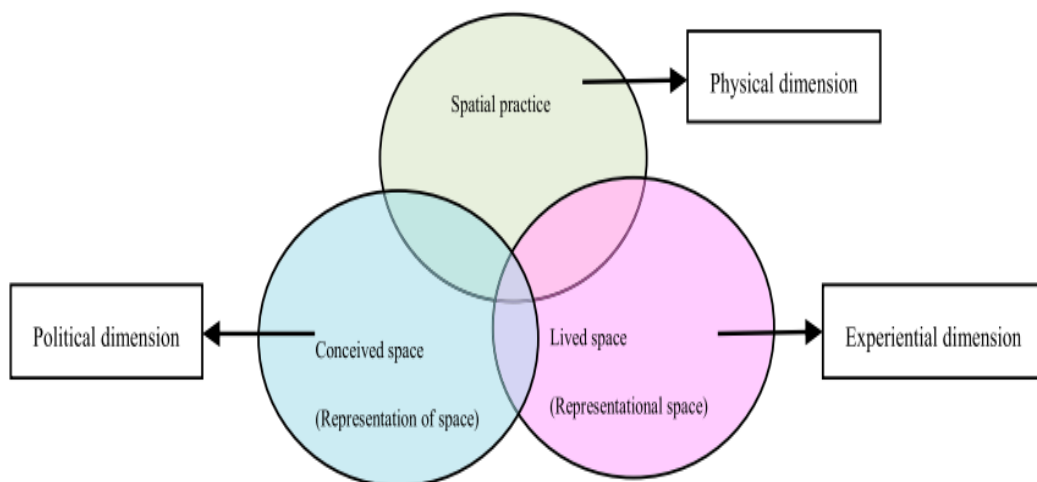


Figure 1. A triad model adapted from Lefebvre (1991) and Trumper-Hecht (2010)

The analytical framework used for this study is borrowed from Scollon and Scollon (2004) and Hult (2018). Drawing on Scollon and Scollon (2004), Hult (2018) recommends a nexus analysis of ‘discourses in place,’ ‘interaction order,’ and ‘historical body’ to be able to get a true account of the language dynamics of a state. The first aspect, ‘discourses in place,’ is related to a relationship among

languages in the policy documents, ideologies of language in *de jure* policies, shared knowledge in *de facto* policies, the layout of physical space, and artifacts shaping policy making and interpretation. ‘Historical body’ refers to the lived experiences of actors. It is related to people’s beliefs about languages, experiences with language policies, and norms of making and implementing policies. The third discourse, i.e. discourse of ‘interactional order’, is related to a relationship among actors at an interpersonal and an institutional level. Interactional order is relevant to patterns of interaction in a setting or context and modalities (writing, speaking, signage, and visuals).

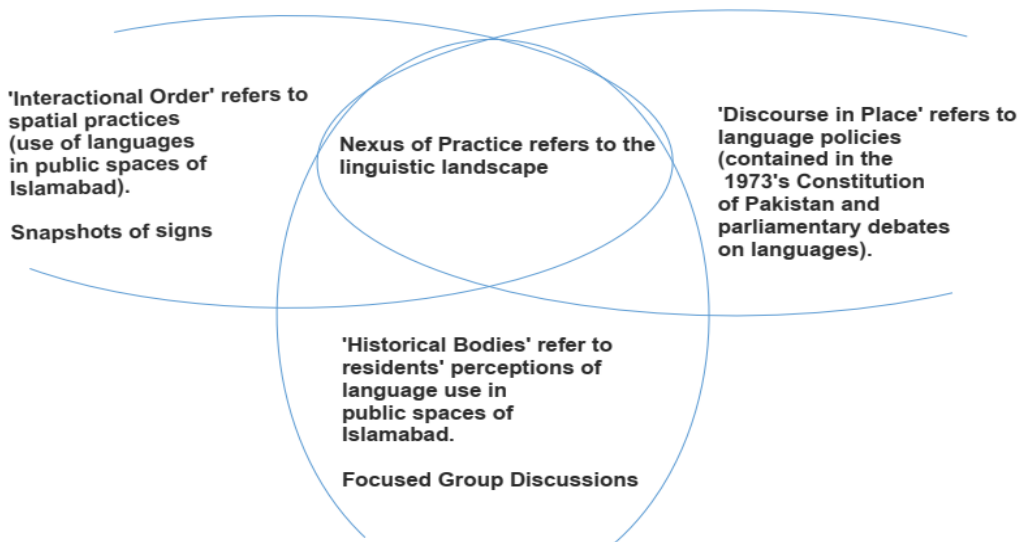


Figure 2. Nexus Analysis adapted from Hult (2018)

3. Data and methods

The current study aims to analyze three related dimensions—spatial practice, conceived space, and the lived space—of the LL. For the exploration of these dimensions, data were collected in the form of language policy documents, LL images, and focused group discussions with the local populace. Further, Hult (2018) and Scollon and Scollon (2004) discuss three types of discourses in nexus analysis, i.e. ‘discourse in place’, ‘interactional order’ and ‘historical body’. To observe discourses in place, language policy documents (Constitution of Pakistan (1973)) were analyzed; for interactional order, snapshots taken with a digital camera were analysed; and for historical body, focused group discussions were analysed. Data collection

3.1. Context and snapshots

The selection of the context is the initial stage in LL research (Scollon & Scollon 2004). Our study was delimited to Islamabad. To get an idea of the spatial practice in the city, we targeted sectors such as I-8, G-9, G-10, F-7, F-8, F-10, Blue

Area, Melody Market, and Abpara Market of the city (See Figure 3). These sectors were selected as they have densely populated markets. We marked survey areas in these markets. For marking the geographical boundaries of the survey area, we relied on Tufi and Blackwood (2010) and Blackwood (2011), who proposed a stretch of 50 continuous meters as a survey area. A sample of 1213 pictures was collected from all sectors.

For the unit of analysis, the current study uses the definition of LL by Landry and Bourhis (1997) and includes fixed signs only. Additionally, the study was limited to private signs including commercial signs, political signs, religious signs, and graffiti. Government signs (top-down signs) directly reflect language policies, and our aim was to examine the influence of state language policies on private linguistic practices – spatial practices. Therefore, we limited our study to private signs. Moreover, private signs represent a bottom-up linguistic landscape, reflecting the language preferences of business owners, advertisers, and the general public. Unlike government signage, which follows official language policies, private signage is shaped by socioeconomic, cultural, and consumer-driven factors. By studying private signs, we could assess whether language policy is aligned with actual linguistic preferences in public spaces or whether there is a disconnect.

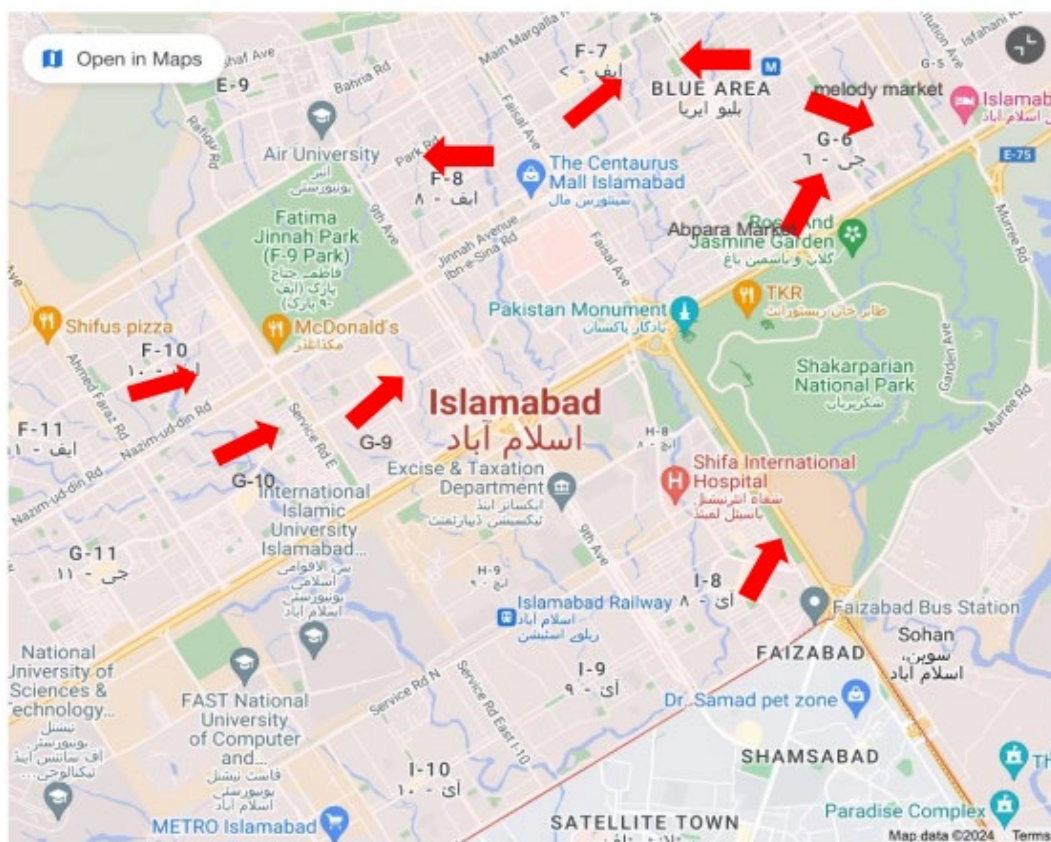


Figure 3. Survey Areas on the map of Islamabad

The red arrows on the map of Islamabad show the survey areas and data collection sites.

3.2. Focused group discussions

In order to elicit responses from the respondents about language use in public spaces, three focused group discussions were recorded. Through a careful sampling technique, seven participants for Group 1 were recruited, eight for Group 2, and seven for Group 3 to ensure representation from different social, linguistic, and professional backgrounds. The focused group discussions were formed in different survey areas, including I-8 Markaz, G-9 Markaz and Abpara Market of Islamabad. The age of the participants varies from 25 to 45 years. The participants were speakers of different languages including Punjabi, Sindhi, Saraiki, Pashto, Potohari, and Balti. The participants were from different professional backgrounds, such as business owners, shopkeepers, students, nurses, daily wagers, and teachers. Due to cultural sensitivity, we were unable to recruit female participants in the focused groups of the study. It was challenging to make a group of participants for discussion. However, we found it convenient to form a group of people at tea bars, juice corners, and cafes. The researchers invited participants for discussion by offering small gifts and tea, juice, or fast food. The discussions were recorded in Urdu as it serves as a lingua franca in Islamabad. The discussions with each group took 40 to 55 minutes. We played the role of facilitators during the discussion. Arguments among the participants were helpful in carrying on discussions. We did not have any specific set of questions except three to four questions related to participants' perceptions of language use in public spaces and language policies of Pakistan. While conducting focused group discussions, the researcher would suspend photographic data collection ensuring that the participants and researchers had a dedicated space for discussion.

3.3. Language policy documents and parliamentarians' interviews

Linguistic landscape displays the traces of historical and contemporary language policies, including those that are explicit as well as those that are implicitly implemented (Backhaus 2007, Shohamy 2010). We downloaded the Constitution of Pakistan (1973) from the government of Pakistan's website (www.gov.pk) and searched parliamentarians' debates and interviews on language-related matters to understand the language policies of Pakistan. The YouTube channel of Parliament TV was searched for speeches. The news channels, such as Geo News, ARY News and Dawn News, were searched for parliamentarians' interviews on the matters of languages.

3.4. Data analysis

According to Hult (2018), there are three types of discourses in nexus analysis: 'discourses in place', 'interactional order' and 'historical body'. To observe

discourses in place, we analyzed language policy documents and parliamentarians' debates and interviews on the matters of languages; for interactional order, we analyzed snapshots taken with a digital camera; and for historical body, focused group discussions with participants were analyzed. The results are given below.

3.5. Snapshots

The unit of analysis, i.e. snapshots of signs, included signs of street names, business names, posters displayed on shop gates and walls, billboards and noticeboards, signs displayed on private institution buildings, and announcements captured with a digital camera. They were classified into three groups: monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. For this study, monolingual signs use one language, bilingual signs use two, and multilingual signs use more than two. Our interpretation of a multilingual sign is different from the the existing understanding as reflected in Backhaus (2006) and Lia (2013). The categorization of the unit of analysis allowed us to analyze the visibility and invisibility of language use in public places.

The figures below display examples of monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual signs.



Figure 4. An examples of a Monolingual sign

Figure 4 displays an examples of a monolingual sign. The sign contains only English and is treated as monolingual.



Figure 5. An example of a bilingual sign

The sign in Figure 5 is an example of a bilingual sign. The sign contains English and Arabic and is treated as bilingual.



Figure 6. An example of a trilingual sign

The sign in Figure 6 is an example of a multilingual sign as it displays 3 languages: Arabic, Chinese, and English.

Along with visibility, salience is also an important aspect of language display in public spaces, as pointed out by Scollon and Scollon (2004). Salience refers to the top/down, left-right, central and corner position of a language with other languages and font size of languages on multilingual signs. The languages displayed on top, center, and written in a bigger size are regarded as a dominant language (Han 2019, Scollon & Scollon 2004).

3.6. Focused group discussions and document analysis

The discussions of the respondents were transcribed, translated, and analyzed through thematic analysis. The policy-related document i.e., the 1973's Constitution of Pakistan, was analysed for interconnections between policy, spatial practice, and perceptions of language use. In thematic analysis, coding was conducted by defining, naming, and reviewing the themes. Different strategies, like back-and-forth movement in the study between literature and unstructured data, was used to ensure clarity, authenticity, and relevance of the coding/thematic scheme. After the analysis of all three dimensions, we used the nexus analysis presented by Scollon and Scollon (2004) and refined by Hult (2018) for identifying connections between language policies, spatial practice, and residents' perceptions of language use in public spaces of Islamabad.

4. Findings of the study

4.1. Spatial practice (physical dimension)

Spatial practice refers to the use of language in public spaces. This section deals with the visibility or invisibility of languages in the linguistic landscape of Islamabad and salience of the languages on signs in the linguistic landscape of Islamabad.

4.1.1. (in)Visibility of languages

The first phase included classifying signs into monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. The data analysis identified that out of 1213 signs, 783 signs were monolingual, 376 signs were bilingual and 54 signs were multilingual.

Table 1. (In)Visibility of languages on monolingual, bilingual and multilingual signs

Languages	English		Urdu		Arabic		Chinese		Others		Total signs (1213)	%
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%		
Monolingual	775	98.97	05	0.6	00	00	03	0.38	00	00	783	64.55
Bilingual	321	85.37	346	92	23	6.11	07	1.86	00	00	376	30.99
Trilingual	54	100	46	85	41	75.9	07	13	00	00	54	4.45

Table 1 demonstrates the visibility of languages and the percentage of monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual signs. The total number of monolingual signs is 783, which constitutes 64.55% of the whole number (1213). The total number of bilingual signs is 376 out of 1213, therefore about 31% of the signs are bilingual. The total number of multilingual signs is 54 (4.45 %).

As for language presence, English is the most visible language in the linguistic landscape of Islamabad. English is displayed on 775 monolingual signs out of 783; the visibility percentage for English on monolingual signs is 98.97. It is visible on 321 bilingual signs (85.37%) and on 54 trilingual or multilingual signs (100%). During data analysis, we noticed that monolingual signs were in abundance in elite business areas, such as Sector I-8, Sector F-8, F-10 and Blue Area of Islamabad. These areas feature a strong presence of international brands, making them hubs of global business and commerce. In the context of Pakistan, English is preferred over Urdu and other languages for branding (Manan et al. 2017). The extensive use of English on monolingual signs can therefore be linked to the presence of international branding. Moreover, the wide use of English can be linked to its prestige and international appeal. One of the study's participants acknowledged the use of English and stated that 'English serves as a means of attracting customers in larger cities, particularly in Islamabad. Therefore, the use of English for signage is preferred over other languages.' During focused group discussion, a participant asserted that the use of English on signage is a market trend: 'A larger segment of private signage displays English in Islamabad. Therefore, everyone tries to write their shop name in English rather than Urdu'. Additionally, the use of English on signage is preferred in Islamabad as it serves the purposes of foreign visitors. One of the study participants mentioned that 'foreigners mostly visit F Sectors and Blue Area of Islamabad. To assist foreign tourists, it is important to display English on signage. Furthermore, English serves the purposes of the local community as well. Since the Blue Area, F-10, and F-8 sectors have a strong presence of brands, most literate people visit these areas for shopping and other purposes'.

Urdu holds the second position in terms of visibility on signs in the LL of Islamabad. However, Urdu remains almost invisible on monolingual signs, as it is written only on 5 signs and the visibility percentage is 0.6. Urdu remains the most dominant language on bilingual signs. It is used on 346 out of 376 bilingual signs. The visibility percentage for Urdu on bilingual signs is 92%. Urdu is also visible on 46 multilingual signs out of 54. It is the second most visible language on multilingual signs. A larger portion of bilingual signs was collected from more

mixed socio-economic areas, such as Abpara Market, Sector G-9, and Sector I-10 of Islamabad. Compared to the sectors and areas mentioned above, these survey areas do not boast a stronger presence of international brands. As pointed out by one of the study's participants, 'Urdu serves as a lingua franca in larger metropolitan cities of Pakistan.' The wider use of Urdu on bilingual signs can be linked to its role as a bridge language for wider communication. Furthermore, the use of Urdu on signs was preferred as it is associated with identity. A participant stated: 'it is our national language and a marker of our identity. Its presence on signs in the capital is mandatory.' Since Urdu is visible on most of the bilingual signs, it is used as a means of making signs multilingual, which serves the purpose of the local community. It appears on bilingual signs mostly in combination with English where it is used for translation and transliteration.

Arabic is not visible on any monolingual sign in our study. However, it is visible on 23 bilingual signs (6.11%) and 41 multilingual signs (75.9%). Arabic is used on bilingual and multilingual signs. Arabic is associated with Islam, and in most cases, Arabic appears in the form of Quranic verses. It is also used for writing the names of Allah. However, it is not used for conveying specific information. The use of Arabic is linked to its association with religious identity.

Among other languages, Chinese demonstrates visibility in the LL of Islamabad. It is visible on 3 monolingual signs (0.38%), 7 bilingual signs (1.86%) and 7 trilingual or multilingual signs (13%). The visibility of Chinese in the capital of Pakistan is linked to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. A study participant who preferred the use of local languages for signage asserted that 'the signs displaying Chinese were recently designed. The number of Chinese tourists and workers increases day by day since major projects are operated by China across Pakistan. Chinese will dominate the landscape of Pakistan in near future. Unfortunately, our local languages are not valued'.

Local languages do not appear on signs in the linguistic landscape of Islamabad. The absence of local language can be explained by the lack of linguistic proficiency in the local languages. During the discussion, a participant stated: 'Local languages are not taught at school or college. Therefore, it becomes difficult for local community to write and read in the local languages, and they are not written on signboards in the linguistic landscape of Islamabad.' Another participant stated that Pakistan is a linguistically rich country with more than 60 languages. Islamabad is home to people from all provinces and people from different linguistic backgrounds. It becomes impossible to put so many languages on signs in Islamabad; additionally, the use of local languages may not serve the purposes of the Pakistani community and foreigners. For instance, a Punjabi speaker may not be able to read Pashto or other languages. However, Urdu and English are taught at school and serve both the Pakistani community and foreigners. The absence of local languages from the LL of Islamabad indicates the lower and inferior status of indigenous languages, associated with lower socio-economic status. The extensive use of English on brands coupled with the absence of local languages manifests the

perception that local languages are impractical for business and economic affairs. Moreover, Pakistan's language policies have granted official recognition to English and Urdu, while local languages have remained neglected. Therefore, local languages remain absent from education, media (Rahman 2007), and other spheres including the linguistic landscape.

Our findings identified English's dominant presence in the LL of Islamabad. Following English, Urdu is the second widely visible language in the LL of Islamabad, while Arabic is the third most visible language in the linguistic landscape of Islamabad. Chinese is observed as an emerging language, written mostly on new signboards. Except English, Urdu, Arabic, and Chinese, no other languages feature in the linguistic landscape of Islamabad. The reasons for this hierarchical construction of the LL of Islamabad are international branding, international appeal, community needs, business and commerce, and the state language policies.

4.1.2. *Linguistic salience of languages: Dominant vs marginalized code*

Salience refers to the top/down, left-right, central and corner position of a language with other languages and font size of languages on multilingual signs. Linguistic salience of languages makes languages dominant compared to other languages on bilingual and multilingual signs (Carr 2021, Han 2019, Scollon & Scollon 2004). Our study included signs that are written in Urdu and Arabic. Both Arabic and Urdu are written from right to left. In such cases, a language that is written towards the right was treated as a dominant code, and a language that is written towards the left is treated as a marginalized code. Moreover, the study included signs that display languages written from opposite directions—for example, English and Urdu: English is written from left to right and Urdu is written from right to left. In this case, both languages are treated as equal in terms of placement on signboards, and font size was used to identify the dominance and marginalization of codes.



Figure 7. An example of dominant code on bilingual and trilingual signs

In Figure 7, Arabic is treated as a dominant code as it is written towards the right and also in bigger and bold font. Urdu, on the other hand, is considered a marginalized code; it is situated towards the left in less prominent font. While analyzing the salience of languages in the LL, it is worth noticing that such analysis includes comparison between/among languages written on a single sign. Thus, monolingual signs were excluded from the analysis and only bilingual and trilingual signs were analyzed. After the analysis of 430 signs (bilingual and multilingual), it was noted that English was the most dominant language that was written on the top and in the center (103 signs). Urdu was the second dominant language that was written on the top, and in the center and towards the right side on 43 signs. Arabic was written on the top and in the center of only 17 signs. Chinese was written on the top of only one sign. In terms of bold font and bigger font, English dominated the LL of Islamabad. It was written in bold and bigger font on 96 signs out of 430 bilingual and multilingual signs. Urdu was the second most common language written in bold and bigger font on 26 signs. Arabic was written in bigger and bold font on 19 signs. Chinese was written in bigger and bold font on only one sign.

It can be concluded that English is the most dominant language followed by Urdu, Arabic, and Chinese both in terms of visibility and salience. The dominance of English and marginalization of other languages are linked to language policy and residents' perceptions in the study. The next section provides an overview of state language policies.

4.2. Language policies (political dimension)

4.2.1. The constitution of Pakistan (de jure language policy)

Pakistan has no detailed language policy. The Constitution of Pakistan contains limited information related to language. Article 28 of the Constitution states, “subject to Article 251, any section of citizens having a distinct language, script or culture shall have the rights to preserve and promote the same and subject to law, establish institutions for that purpose”.

Article 28 in conjunction with Article 251 of the Constitution acknowledges linguistic diversity in Pakistan. Such constitutional recognition is crucial in rich multilingual Pakistan where more than 70 languages are spoken. The Article also guarantees the preservation of linguistic heritage within the nation. The emphasis on institutions established by law shows the intentions of safeguarding linguistic heritage via organized means. However, the effectiveness of this provision is dependent on the practical implementation of policies to ensure linguistic preservation within the country.

Article 31 of the Constitution of Pakistan encourages the teaching of Arabic. In the multilingual context of Pakistan where more than 60 languages are spoken, the Article highlights the attempts to promote the teaching of Islam and the Arabic language. The language is associated with Islamic education, thus its learning and teaching in the context of Pakistan are justified. The preservation of local languages

is emphasized on one hand, but on the other hand, the teaching of Arabic is accentuated. Balancing the teaching of Arabic and the preservation of local languages is important; the teaching of Arabic aligns with the religious aspects of the major population and the preservation of local languages aligns with the cultural identity of various ethnic groups.

Article 251 of the constitution states that:

“1. The National language of Pakistan is Urdu, and arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes within fifteen years from the commencing day.

2. Subject to clause (1), the English language may be used for official purposes until arrangements are made for its replacement by Urdu.

3. Without prejudice to the status of the National language, a Provincial Assembly may by law prescribe measures for the teaching, promotion and use of a Provincial language in addition to the National language”.

The 1973 Constitution of Pakistan declares English as the official language and Urdu as the national language of the state. The Constitution states that English may be used for official purposes until arrangements for its replacement with Urdu are made. The arrangements for replacement of English with Urdu for official purposes have not been made yet. Both English and Urdu take precedence in all language policies of Pakistan. Urdu remains preferred language at the state level and may be declared an official language. Moreover, it is stated that ‘without prejudice to the status of Urdu, the provincial assembly may by law promote the teaching of local languages’. At the same time, local languages may be promoted in addition to Urdu. However, local languages receive no attention at state level. Only three languages, Arabic, English and Urdu, and this order reflects their state value. Except for rhetoric, the norms and patterns inherited from British colonialism have remained unchanged. Urdu has been associated with national integrity while English has been regarded as the language of elites. Arabic has been associated with religion and remains a marker of religious identity. Local languages, however, are ignored. More importantly, the Constitution itself is written in English which reflects the central and key role of English as a dominant language in Pakistan.

4.2.2. Parliamentarians’ debates and interviews on the matters of languages (de facto language policies)

The study focused on Geo News, ARY News and Dawn News YouTube channels for parliamentarians’ interviews on languages as well as Parliament TV for their parliamentary speeches on languages. No single interview or parliamentary speech on languages was identified. The lack of discussion on languages at higher levels by stakeholders reflects the neglect of matters related to languages at macro levels.

4.3. Residents' perceptions (experiential dimension)

Residents' perceptions of their languages is one of the three interconnected domains of LL research. Focused group discussions were recorded to identify the community's perceptions of spatial practices in Islamabad. Most of the respondents favoured English by providing the reasons specified in the following subsections. The participants of the study were given pseudonyms.

4.3.1. Brands (A class indicator):

Ahmar: "Majority of the shopping malls are the international brands. English is the most suitable language for international brands".

Salman: "Only the elite class buys things in big stores and brand shops. Writing English on brands attracts the elite. English is the language of elites. They like English; it should be written on shops to attract customers".

During the focused group discussions, it was noted that the participants prefer using English for signboards, particularly brand names. As shown by the data above, the participants are of the opinion that English is the only language used for international brands, and it attracts the elite if it is displayed on shop signs.

4.3.2. Globalization/Internationalization:

Kashif: "Islamabad is an international city. English is an international language; it should be written on signboards to help people visiting Islamabad from all over the world".

The federal capital is thought to be an international city. The use of English in the LL of Islamabad may attract foreigners.

4.3.3. Colonial mindset

Rehman: "English is favoured and will be favoured in future because of our history, i.e., our colonial past; it is the language of linguistic landscape, curriculum, language of research, language of media, language of court and all other domains in Pakistan. It will not be replaced by any other languages in near future. Its dominance in Pakistan is due to the colonial past."

The above quote from a focused group discussion highlights the dominance of English in Pakistan in relation to our colonial past. Before Partition, English was institutionalized as the language of education, administration, and legal affairs by the British Empire in colonial India. After the independence of Pakistan up to the present day, English remains the dominant language in all spheres. The dominance of English and its unlikely replacement reflects the enduring colonial legacy. English is part of the curriculum, used in educational settings, widely visible in the linguistic landscape of the country, used in research, media, and the judiciary. It is predicted that no language will replace English in the near future. In addition to

English, Urdu was prioritized by a majority of the participants. The reason for preferring Urdu is discussed below.

4.3.4. Urdu: The national language and lingua franca

Rehan: “Urdu is our national language. It is spoken everywhere in Pakistan. It is easy to understand. It should be used in public spaces”.

Hussain: “The local population in Pakistan is far greater than that of foreign population; everyone can read it. How can a labourer understand English? Urdu must be written on shop signs”.

The Constitution of Pakistan (1973) has declared Urdu as the national language of Pakistan. The macro-level policies shape micro-level practices and the community’s attitude about language(s). A majority of the study’s participants preferred Urdu to be written on signboards in public spaces as it is the national language of Pakistan. According to Rahman (2006), Urdu is the native tongue of less than 8% of the population of Pakistan. The language serves as a lingua franca in Pakistan. Being the national language of Pakistan, Urdu is associated with national integrity and thus desired by the local populace.

4.3.5. Indigenous languages: Languages desired but detested

“I love my mother tongue; you know it’s my MOTHER TONGUE, my MOTHER TONGUE. My language is my identity. I am unable to read and write in my language. I can only speak my language. However, writing Pashto on signboards will not serve the purpose for many people in multilingual city like Islamabad.”

Indigenous languages are desired because they are associated with ethnic identity. On the other hand, local/Indigenous languages are detested in practice. Indigenous languages are not part of the curriculum. The majority of the local populace is unable to write or read in local languages. Indigenous languages are not used in domains like education, media, legal affairs, official affairs, and so on. Indigenous languages are not integral to macro-level policies. Thus, the indigenous languages are invisible in the LL of Islamabad. Moreover, local/indigenous languages are associated with rural identity and lower socio-economic status. Therefore, they are seen as impractical for business and commercial purposes.

4.4. The (dis)connects across the practices – perceptions - policy nexus

The macro-level policies shape actual language practices and community attitude of spatial practice. English, Urdu and Arabic are recognized by the state language policies. Thus, English is visible on most of the monolingual, bilingual, and trilingual signs. Almost all brand names are written in English. The participants of the study also emphasized its use in the linguistic landscape of Pakistan. Urdu holds second position in terms of visibility on signs in the linguistic landscape of Islamabad. Urdu is associated with national unity and integrity. It serves the

purpose of a lingua franca in Pakistan. The language is desired by the local populace to be used in the linguistic landscape of Islamabad. The teaching of Arabic has been emphasized in the language policy of Pakistan and it is visible in the linguistic landscape of Islamabad. Local languages are not recognized by the state language policies and are invisible in the linguistic landscape of Islamabad. Local languages are desired by the local populace but detested in various domains, including public spaces. It is thus clear that a strong nexus exists among language policies, spatial practice, and residents' perceptions in the context of Islamabad.

5. Discussion

This study explores the linguistic landscape of Islamabad. We attempted to find a nexus among the three interrelated domains of the LL: spatial practice, policy, and community perceptions of language use in public spaces. Drawing on the data, we identified the dominance of various languages across all three domains of the study. The data explicitly confirmed the dominance of English in terms of visibility and linguistic salience in the linguistic landscape of Islamabad. The extensive use of English in the linguistic landscape of Islamabad is due to globalization, its international appeal, its utility for international branding, marketability, and its stylistic and artistic synchronization.

The linguistic landscape of a region serves a symbolic function. It is a marker of sociolinguistic dynamism, marginalization, and the relative status and power of languages and their varieties (Blommaert 2013). Moreover, the LL of polity is linked to language policies (*de jure* and *de facto*) and language perceptions. Symbolically, the extensive use of English in the LL can be linked to various sociopolitical, socio-psychological and cultural factors. In the context of Pakistan, English is the symbol of elitism, modernization, and sophistication. Additionally, the state language policy recognized English as the official language of Pakistan which shapes language practices and community perceptions of English. Thus, the selection of English for signage in the LL of Islamabad can be linked to language policies at the state level. From political perspectives, the dominance of English in various spheres can be associated with the country's colonial history. The situation in Pakistan can be related to the situation in Africa as described by Putz (2020). According to Putz (2020), the local/African languages in the context of Africa suffer due to the colonial past. Similarly in Pakistan, before the independence, English was institutionalized as the language of education, administration, and legal affairs by the British. After the independence of Pakistan and to the present date, English remains the dominant language in all spheres including media, education, and the LL. The dominance of English and its unlikely replacement reflects its enduring colonial legacy.

Urdu is the second most dominant language in the LL of Islamabad, as it appears mostly on bilingual and multilingual signs with English and Arabic. The use of Urdu with English on bilingual and multilingual signs is due to its role as a local lingua franca. The state language policies have recognized Urdu as the sole

national language of Pakistan. The data of the study reflects that the use of Urdu in the LL of Islamabad is linked to its status as the national language of Pakistan. Moreover, the use of Urdu is linked to identity, national integrity, and unity. Due to its symbolic value and political association, Urdu becomes a dominant language in various spheres in the context of Pakistan where it is the native tongue of less than 8% of people.

Following Urdu, Arabic appears as the third most dominant language in the LL of Islamabad. The language is associated with the teaching of Islam and the Quran. Arabic is considered a sacred language and a marker of religious identity. Although Arabic does not serve the purposes of the local community in the LL of Pakistan, its religious association makes it a dominant language in the LL of Islamabad. Moreover, it is recognized by the state language policies and its teaching at the school level is emphasized. Therefore, the language appears in the LL of Islamabad and its use is desired by passersby, business owners, and creators of the LL in Islamabad. Drawing on the data, it is concluded that Chinese is gaining ground in the LL of Islamabad. The appearance of Chinese in the LL of Islamabad can be linked to commerce and industrialization and, more importantly, to the CPEC project. The teaching of Chinese in the context of Pakistan is rapidly increasing as various Chinese teaching centers are established in the private sectors and universities across Pakistan. The teaching of Chinese equally contributes to its appearance in the LL of various cities, particularly Islamabad.

Our data revealed that none of the local languages except Urdu appears in the LL of Islamabad. The use of local languages is desired because they are associated with ethnic identity. On the other hand, local languages are not preferred in practice as they are associated with rural identity and lower socioeconomic status. Local languages are not recognized by the state language policies. The macro-level policy discourses shape language practices and shape community attitudes of their languages (Rahman 2007). Local languages are absent from education and mainstream media in Pakistan. Due to the exclusion of local languages from curriculum, a larger portion of the local community lacks linguistic proficiency, particularly in writing and reading, in their native languages. Additionally, local languages are seen as impractical for business and commercial purposes. Thus, local languages are not given space in public spaces of Islamabad. Politically, the promotion of local languages is narrowly monitored as the promotion of local languages is seen as a threat and prejudice towards the status of the national language, Urdu.

The data confirmed that there is a strong nexus between language policies, spatial practices, and residents' perceptions of language use. The LL of a region is the manifestation of linguistic hierarchies, ideologies shaped by various factors and also as an act of resistance in a multiethnic community (Putz 2020). The state language policies are deeply influenced by various political and ideological factors. The state language policies shape people's perceptions of actual language practices. Only the state-recognized languages remain dominant in the LL of Islamabad and

are preferred by residents for signage. However, very few creators and readers of the LL of Islamabad advocate for the use of local languages in signage. Keeping in view the importance of linguistic diversity, we urge more inclusive language policies and linguistic landscape that promote linguistic diversity in the context of Pakistan.

6. Conclusion

The current study explored the linguistic landscape of Islamabad. The study was informed by Trumper-Hecht's (2010) Triad Model for Linguistic Landscape as it studied the use of language on private signs in the city, residents' perceptions of language use in the public spaces of Islamabad, and language policies of Pakistan. A Nexus Analysis of Hult (2018) was employed to understand how the nexus of spatial practices, residents' perceptions, and language policies shape the LL of the city. Findings reveal that English, Urdu, and Arabic dominate the LL of Islamabad, whereas Chinese is an emerging language. English, Urdu, and Arabic are integral to language policies and are preferred by residents for public signage. Despite the residents' affection for their use in public spaces of Islamabad, local languages remained absent in the LL of Islamabad. The data indicated that globalization, international appeal, utility for international branding, marketability, and stylistic and artistic synchronization were the factors motivating the extensive use of English in the linguistic landscape of Islamabad. Importantly, the designation of English as the official language of Pakistan through state language policies has contributed to its dominance in the LL along with various domains, including media, education, and legal affairs. Following English, Urdu is the second dominant language in the linguistic landscape. The dominance of Urdu is linked to its designation as the sole national language of Pakistan through level macro-level policies and its role as a lingua franca in the context of Pakistan. Arabic is the third language dominating the LL of Islamabad. The teaching of Arabic is emphasized in the state language policy, and the language is associated with the teaching of Islam and the Quran. Therefore, it is considered a sacred language in the context of Pakistan. The dominance of Arabic in the LL of Islamabad was linked to its association with the teaching of Islam and its status as a religious and sacred language. Chinese is an emerging language, and its emergence in the LL of the city is due to various developmental projects, particularly CPEC, operated by China in Pakistan. Moreover, the data reflected that the absence of local languages in the LL of Islamabad was due to the community's lack of linguistic proficiency in their native tongues. Additionally, local and indigenous languages are not prioritized in state language policies and, as a result, remain absent from various domains, including the linguistic landscape. Overall, the findings of the study reveal that there is a strong connection between language policies, residents' perceptions, and spatial practices in the context of Islamabad. The findings of the study have serious implications for the Pakistani indigenous languages and indicate a need for inclusive language policies and awareness initiatives to protect linguistic diversity in Pakistan.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Turab Hussain: Conceptualization, Data collection, Data analysis, Writing – original draft; **Muhammad Haseeb Nasir:** Conceptualization, Visualisation, Supervision; **Aziz Khan:** Conceptualisation, Study design, Critical revision of the manuscript, Proofreading.

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