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Whiteness as currency: Exploring racial ideologies in Pakistan's English language teaching sphere

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ABSTRACT

Addressing the problem of racial ideologies in Pakistan's English Language Teaching (ELT) sphere, this study examines the practices within the Society of Pakistani English Language Teachers (SPELT) and the Linguistic Association of Pakistan (LAP). It argues that English's elevated status, a remnant of colonial legacies, marginalizes local languages, perpetuating racial disparities. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative analysis of interviews with SPELT and LAP members, drawing theoretical framework of Alim (2016) and Flores and Rosa (2015). The findings reveal a deep-rooted preference for English, symbolizing 'whiteness' and sophistication, thereby sustaining racial hierarchies in ELT. This research highlights the urgency of decolonizing educational practices, advocating for inclusive and diverse language teaching that dissociates language proficiency from racial constructs. The study's significance lies in its contribution to the broader discourse on education reform, highlighting the necessity of policy changes that embrace linguistic and cultural equity.

1. Introduction

Several years ago, I was invited to an ELT conference in Pakistan, where a colleague's casual inquiry about whether "gorras" (Western white speakers) would be attending revealed the lingering colonial mentality that continues to shape the country's English Language Teaching (ELT) sector. The term "gorra," with its colonial overtones, exemplifies the deep-rooted privileging of whiteness in language education, reflecting broader global patterns of "linguistic imperialism" (Phillipson, 1992). This phenomenon is not merely about language proficiency but the ways in which whiteness is intertwined with English, reinforcing racial hierarchies (Flores & Rosa, 2023). Globally, the ELT field is implicated in the perpetuation of raciolinguistic ideologies, positioning English spoken by white, native speakers as the standard, while other varieties of English, especially those spoken by racialized groups, are delegitimized (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Such dynamics expose how ELT systems, both in the Global North and South, remain complicit in maintaining racial inequalities, where proximity to whiteness—whether through accent, appearance, or cultural background—determines linguistic authority and social value (Kubota & Lin, 2006; Ramjattan, 2019). This alignment of whiteness with power in language education speaks to broader critiques of whiteness as a construct that upholds racial inequalities across various domains (DiAngelo, 2021; Sekaja et al., 2022).

In the context of Pakistan, these global dynamics manifest in complex, historically entrenched ways. The country's colonial history continues to exert influence over its language policies, where English retains a socio-economic and racial prestige that marginalizes

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local languages such as Punjabi, Pashto, and Sindhi (Rahman, 2004; Manan et al., 2017). English is often seen as the language of modernity, progress, and elite status, a perception that perpetuates a racialized hierarchy of language use, as highlighted by Kubota and Lin (2009) and Flores and Rosa (2017). This hierarchy, far from being a neutral linguistic preference, embeds social control mechanisms that privilege an elite, English-speaking minority while relegating indigenous language speakers to the margins of educational and economic systems (Rahman, 2010; Haider & Fang, 2019). The commodification of English within neoliberal frameworks (Harvey, 2007; Sewell, 2016) further reinforces these inequities, positioning English—and by extension, whiteness—as an asset in the global marketplace. Considering these dynamics, this study aims to investigate how members of the Society of Pakistani English Language Teachers (SPELT) and the Linguistic Association of Pakistan (LAP) articulate racial ideologies within Pakistani ELT landscape. By examining these global and historical influences, this study engages with the persistent colonial legacies in Pakistan's language education, challenging the racially stratified system that privileges whiteness and calling for a more inclusive and equitable approach to ELT. The study specifically answers the following research question:

RQ: How do members of SPELT and LAP articulate racial ideologies in their interviews, and how do these ideologies, in conjunction with historical discourses, structure racial inequalities within Pakistan's ELT development?

The significance of this study lies in its critical examination of the intersection between race and language in Pakistan's ELT sector, revealing how colonial legacies and Western dominance perpetuate the racialization of English proficiency. By interrogating the association of whiteness with linguistic authority, this research exposes the ongoing marginalization of Pakistan's diverse linguistic heritage. It contributes to the global discourse on decolonizing education by underscoring the need to dismantle racial and linguistic inequalities. Ultimately, the study advocates for a transformative approach to ELT, challenging entrenched paradigms and pushing for policies that promote inclusivity, equity, and broader representation in language education.

1.1. Context of the study

Pakistan's language policy, situated within a landscape of approximately 74 languages, reflects a deeply problematic legacy of colonialism and entrenched power dynamics. Rather than fostering true multilingualism, the policy has historically reinforced social stratification and ethnic marginalization. Urdu, elevated to the status of national language, is not merely a tool of communication but a marker of national and religious identity (Ayres, 2009; Rahman, 2002), employed strategically in public schools to enforce national unity and suppress ethnic diversity (Rahman, 2005). However, this emphasis on Urdu, particularly during General Zia-ul-Haq's regime, which coupled its promotion with Arabic for ideological purposes, highlights how language has been wielded as an instrument of political and religious control (Rahman, 2010). Such policies not only ignored the linguistic richness of the country but also perpetuated the colonial pattern of privileging certain languages over others, contributing to ethnic and social divisions.

English, the most glaring vestige of colonialism, continues to symbolize power and prestige, disproportionately benefiting the elite and those with access to English-medium education (Manan et al., 2023). The prioritization of English alongside Urdu has historically marginalized indigenous languages, which are often stigmatized as inferior, resulting in the exclusion of vast segments of the population from meaningful participation in academic and professional spheres (Mehboob, 2019). Post-9/11 geopolitical shifts further cemented English's dominance in Pakistan, as alignment with global initiatives like UNESCO's Education for All (EFA, 2002; UNESCO, 2000) reinforced the language's prominence in educational reform (Shier, 2016). Abbas and Bidin (2022) reveal that national and provincial language policies have remained inconsistent, with provinces like Punjab neglecting the promotion of indigenous languages, exacerbating the linguistic marginalization of groups such as Punjabi and Saraiki speakers. Despite some efforts in Sindh and Balochistan to support indigenous languages, the overall policy framework reflects a continuation of colonial attitudes, privileging languages tied to power and elite status. The calls for a paradigm shift in Pakistan's language planning and policy (LPP), as advocated by Abbas and Bidin (2022), emphasize the need to reconceptualize linguistic diversity as an asset rather than a barrier. Without addressing these deeply embedded inequalities, Pakistan's language policies will continue to entrench social hierarchies, hindering any meaningful progress toward inclusivity and national cohesion.

1.2. Race and racialization in education: an overview

The intricate relationship between race and language in the field of education has garnered significant attention, particularly through the lens of Raciolinguistics. Scholars such as Motha (2014), Stillar (2022), Bacon (2019), and Alim (2016) have demonstrated how Raciolinguistic ideologies in English Language Teaching (ELT) position white English speakers as the norm, marginalizing non-white, regional, and indigenous languages. Alim (2016) emphasizes that this shift from traditional sociolinguistic paradigms requires a more nuanced understanding of how language and identity are racially constructed. This critical discourse is expanded by Almeida's (2015) exploration of race-based epistemologies, which critiques the continued marginalization of racialized and Indigenous scholars within mainstream Western academia. Almeida (2015) argues that Eurocentric knowledge production systematically reduces critical contributions from marginalized scholars to mere "experiential insights," maintaining racialized hierarchies within academic discourse. This aligns with Hudley's et al. (2020) call for an interdisciplinary engagement with race and racism within the field of linguistics. Their work highlights the lack of theoretical and analytical frameworks for understanding race in linguistics, emphasizing that this erasure weakens research and excludes scholars of color, whose contributions are often marginalized. Like Almeida's critique of Western knowledge production, Hudley (2016) argues for a transformation of linguistic scholarship that centers racial justice and inclusivity, calling for more robust frameworks that incorporate interdisciplinary insights from anthropology, sociology, education, and critical race studies. This critical engagement with raciolinguistic ideologies is further contextualized by seminal works on linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) and critical discourse analysis (Rogers, 2004; Woolard, 1998), which

challenge the hegemonic linguistic norms that perpetuate racial hierarchies. As Rosa (2019) and Baker-Bell (2020) have noted, such ideologies stigmatize racialized linguistic identities, sustaining structures of inequality within global language education. The need for a racially inclusive and socially just approach to language teaching is echoed across interdisciplinary fields, reinforcing the argument that dominant, Eurocentric paradigms in linguistics must be deconstructed. This body of work not only challenges linguistic norms but calls for a transformation of the very structures of knowledge that sustain white supremacy in language education, a theme underscored by Almeida's (2015) call for race-based epistemologies and Charity Hudley et al.'s (2020) appeal for racial justice in linguistics.

In Pakistan, these global critiques of race, language, and education converge in a context shaped by colonial legacies and contemporary social stratification. Studies by Gillborn et al. (2016) and Sajjad (2020) reveal how post-9/11 educational policies have deepened racial inequalities, reflecting the global resonance of raciolinguistic ideologies that connect language proficiency with racial hierarchies. In particular, the works of Akram and Mahmood (2007), Baumgardner (1993), and Ghani (2003) illustrate how English, as a colonial language, functions as a tool for social stratification in Pakistan. English is not only a medium of communication but a mechanism for reinforcing racial and class-based hierarchies. Baumgardner's (1993) exploration of English as a lingua franca underscores how language serves as a marker of social categorization and racialization, while Akram and Mahmood (2007) and Ghani (2003) further highlight how traditional ELT pedagogies perpetuate these inequities. By situating the study of Pakistan's language education within these broader global frameworks, this literature critically exposes how raciolinguistic ideologies sustain racial inequalities, reinforcing Almeida's (2015) and Charity Hudley et al.'s (2020) calls for a more just and inclusive approach to language teaching and scholarship.

The existing body of research, while extensively addressing raciolinguistic ideologies and the marginalization of non-white linguistic identities, has largely neglected the nuanced intersection of race, language, and colonial legacies in South Asian ELT contexts like Pakistan. This study addresses this gap in the literature by focusing on how non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—SPELT and LAP—function as influential actors within Pakistan's language policy landscape. These NGOs play a crucial role, both formally and informally, in shaping language education beyond direct government interventions, resonating with Johnson's (2013) framework of language policy as operating in both *de facto* and *de jure* forms. In their collaborations with local communities and international bodies, these organizations contribute to either fostering multilingualism and language preservation or perpetuating linguistic hierarchies (Ali, forthcoming). By examining their perspectives, this study offers a critical lens on how colonial legacies and raciolinguistic ideologies manifest in Pakistan's ELT sector, advancing the global discourse on language policy and inequality. By exploring how these organizations either perpetuate or resist colonial legacies and the racialization of English proficiency, this study provides localized insights into the global raciolinguistic frameworks that continue to reinforce systemic inequalities in Pakistan's language education. Moreover, the study positions itself at the forefront of an essential dialogue, challenging the prevailing norms and assumptions within the ELT landscape in contexts like Pakistan. It attempts to examine how racial ideologies, woven into the fabric of ELT through historical and contemporary discourses, shape educators' perspectives and influence pedagogical strategies. By doing so, the study moves beyond traditional analyses and sheds light on how these racial ideologies, often unnoticed or unacknowledged, create a ripple effect that extends beyond the classroom, influencing broader educational policies and societal attitudes.

1.3. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study weaves the works of Alim (2016) and Flores and Rosa (2015) to analyze the dynamics of race, language, and power within Pakistan's ELT landscape. Alim's (2016) exploration of the intersections of race, language, and power, particularly in educational contexts, provides a foundation for examining how linguistic practices are racialized and intertwined with power dynamics. However, Flores and Rosa (2015) expand on Alim's framework by highlighting its limitations in addressing varied and complex socio-historical contexts, especially in non-Western settings. Their critique calls for contextualizing raciolinguistic dynamics within specific historical and colonial legacies, thereby extending Alim's (2016) analysis to reflect the intricacies of language and race co-naturalization more accurately in diverse societal contexts (Flores & Rosa, 2015). This study acknowledges that much raciolinguistic research, predominantly conducted in the Global North, tends to overlook the unique linguistic and racial dynamics prevalent in postcolonial societies. Scholars have historically grappled with the role of colonial languages versus indigenous languages in postcolonial societies, often promoting linguistic diversity without adequately addressing the colonial legacy's impact on racialized communities (Flores & Rosa, 2017; Wynter, 2003). To address this gap, the study adapts the Raciolinguistic frameworks to the Pakistani context, examining the influence of colonial legacies on the co-naturalization of language and race (Alim, 2016; Flores & Rosa, 2015). This involves analyzing how colonialism, which historically positioned English as superior, has impacted Pakistan's language policies, and contributed to the creation of language hierarchies.

Particularly, in Pakistan, the framework explores the transformation of raciolinguistic ideologies in the postcolonial era, examining how colonial distinctions between European and non-European languages, and consequently between whiteness and non-whiteness, continue to influence contemporary linguistic and racial formations. The concept of ecologization of languages is recontextualized to reflect the Pakistani experience, where English is often associated with modernity and progress (Shamim, 2011), while indigenous languages are marginalized or romanticized in the context of national identity and heritage (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Veronelli, 2015 & 2016; Philipson, 1992). Moreover, the framework enables us to examine the perception of racialized language in Pakistan. Building on Flores and Rosa's (2015) concept of the *white listening subject*, it explores how racialized speaking subjects are perceived and evaluated within Pakistani society, where colonial legacies and global power dynamics significantly influence these perceptions. A raciolinguistic perspective situates contemporary language ideologies and policies within broader colonial histories, thereby challenging the construction of modernity produced through logics of colonialism (Rosa & Flores, 2017). In short, by adapting the raciolinguistic frameworks of Alim (2016) and Flores and Rosa (2015) to the Pakistani context, this study not only addresses the Global North-centric

nature of raciolinguistic scholarship but also emphasizes the need for contextualizing these theories within Pakistan's historical and sociolinguistic realities, offering a more nuanced and relevant analysis of race, language, and power dynamics in the Pakistani ELT landscape. This approach not only enriches the understanding of Raciolinguistics in a postcolonial setting but also contributes to the global discourse on language and race, highlighting diverse manifestations beyond the Global North contexts.

1.4. Researchers' positionality

As researchers from Pakistan situated in Finland, we recognize the complex positionality we hold in examining the ELT sector in Pakistan. Our positionality affords us a critical lens informed by both local and global perspectives. Following Milner's (2007) framework of researching the self in relation to others, we actively interrogate our own racialized and cultural positionality throughout the research process. This reflexivity allows us to critically engage with the lingering colonial legacies that shape Pakistan's language policies without imposing Eurocentric assumptions. We strive to acknowledge and disrupt potential biases or unseen dangers that arise when researchers fail to address their embeddedness in systems of knowledge and power. By positioning ourselves within both the South Asian and Western academic contexts, we are uniquely equipped to challenge dominant narratives in ELT discourse, ensuring our analysis remains attentive to local realities and the decolonial aims of this study.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data collection

To critically examine the role of non-state actors in shaping language education policy, this study conducted twenty-six (26) semi-structured interviews with members of two prominent organizations: the¹Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers (SPELT) and the²Linguistic Association of Pakistan (LAP). These organizations were deliberately selected due to their significant influence in shaping language education policy outside formal state mechanisms, aligning with Johnson's (2013) framework of informal, covert, and implicit policy processes. SPELT's advocacy for English as a tool for educational progress and its extensive teacher training initiatives (Gomez, 2011) illustrate how non-governmental entities can strategically influence language policy and practice without direct state intervention. In parallel, LAP's active promotion of multilingualism through research initiatives and partnerships with academic institutions positions it as a key player in contesting monolingual policies, thus challenging hegemonic language practices in Pakistan.

The selection of these organizations was crucial for exploring how language ideologies intersect with racial power structures and colonial legacies in Pakistan's ELT development. Participants were chosen based on a set of stringent criteria (see Fig. 1) that included their academic qualifications—ranging from master's to doctoral degrees in English, Applied Linguistics, and Education—and their involvement in these organizations' policy-shaping activities. This ensured a deeper engagement with participants' nuanced understandings of the historical, ideological, and structural factors shaping language policy. Moreover, to address the issue of representational diversity, interviewees were recruited from multiple cities across Pakistan, ensuring a balance in terms of gender, ethnicity, and regional background.

Significantly, while the study primarily highlights a narrative of resistance to colonial legacies, it is not without acknowledgment of contrasting viewpoints. Participants presented varied responses—ranging from strong advocacy for local linguistic autonomy to pragmatic acceptance of English as a necessary medium for global engagement—reflecting the complex interplay of power, identity, and resistance in Pakistan's ELT sector. Thus, rather than offering a one-sided analysis, the study captures these divergent perspectives to illustrate the ongoing struggle between colonial legacies and local assertions of identity, revealing the contested terrain of language policy and racial dynamics. This multi-layered approach ensures that the study's findings are not skewed toward a single ideological stance but instead provide a comprehensive view of how non-state actors navigate power relations and racial ideologies within Pakistan's language education framework. By situating these responses within broader historical and sociopolitical contexts, the study underscores the critical role of non-state entities like SPELT and LAP in either reinforcing or resisting dominant power structures, thereby offering a nuanced understanding of their strategic positioning in the field of language policy.

Significantly, this study, carried out at a Finnish higher education institution, followed the ethical principles outlined by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (³TENK guidelines, 2019). These guidelines, which emphasize the importance of respecting participants' rights, privacy, and fairness, were crucial in upholding ethical integrity and the credibility of the research. Formal written permissions were obtained from participating NGOs SPELT and LAP in Pakistan to prevent any potential biases or conflicts of interest, and participants provided written consent to ensure their autonomy, anonymity, and dignity were protected.

2.2. Analytical procedure

In this study, we employed Lawless and Chen's (2018) Critical Thematic Analysis (CTA) to carefully analyze the interview data. This choice of methodology was deliberate, given the inherent limitations of conventional thematic analysis frameworks, such as those proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which offer flexibility but often lack critical specificity in linking discourse to broader societal

¹ SPELT: <https://spelt.org.pk/>.

² LAP: <https://www.lap.org.pk/>.

³ TENK Guidelines: <https://tenk.fi/en/advice-and-materials/guidelines-ethical-review-human-sciences>.

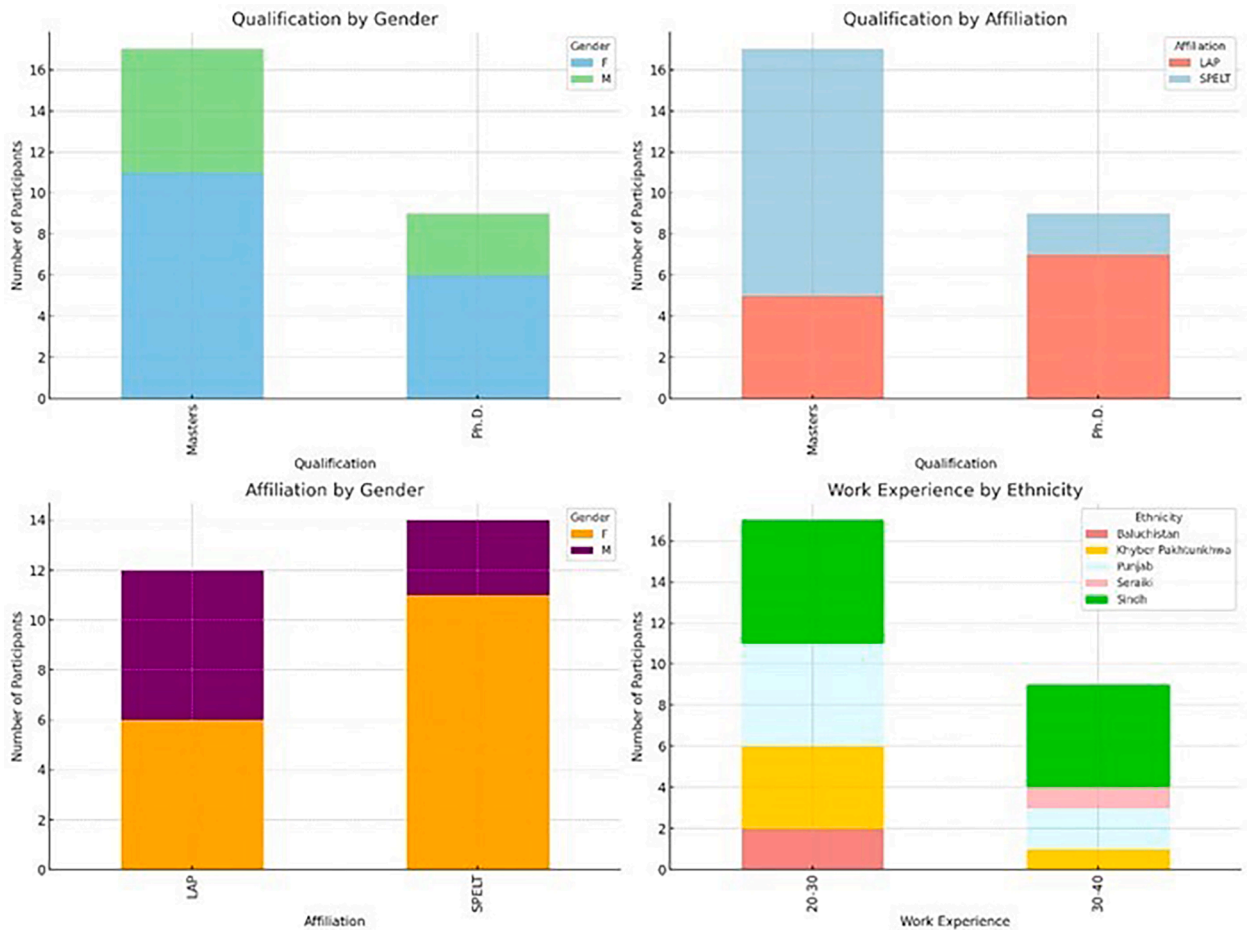


Fig. 1. Participants' information.

power structures. CTA, on the other hand, transcends traditional thematic analysis by embedding criticality into the analytical process itself. Further, CTA rigorously examines how these patterns are interwoven with broader socio-political, historical, and ideological power structures. It demands that researchers not only categorize themes but critically analyze how discourses reproduce inequalities and hegemonic ideologies, providing a more incisive understanding of data in relation to systemic power relations.

Crucially, to avoid cherry-picking and ensure objectivity, we employed a systematic and rigorous coding process. Initial open coding identified key patterns such as recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness, which were followed by a process of closed coding where these patterns were critically linked to dominant ideologies and power structures. Each phase of the coding process was designed to reflect the broader socio-political contexts of Pakistan's ELT sector. The percentage of participants' responses aligned with each theme was also quantified (see Fig. 2) to demonstrate the prominence of each theme, ensuring that the themes derived were not solely reflective of researcher bias. This iterative, reflexive process exposed how everyday language, and practices are embedded in broader systems of inequality and domination. Thus, by adopting CTA by Lawless and Chen (2018), we ensured a deeper, more incisive analysis uniquely suited for examining how interview discourses are embedded in and shaped by unequal power relations and entrenched colonial legacies in language education. Each stage of the coding was also subjected to review by an independent researcher to challenge the initial codes and reduce bias, ensuring that the final themes emerged organically from the data rather than being pre-determined. For instance, the theme of "Colonial Legacy and Western Ideologies" emerged not only as a recurring discourse among participants but also as a reflection of Eurocentric epistemologies that have dominated Pakistan's educational policy since the colonial era.

In addition, selective coding followed where we refined our thematic categories, ensuring each theme captured the depth and complexity of the participants' narratives. For instance, the theme of "Resistance to Western Influence and Assertion of Local Identity" was carefully substantiated through recurrent discourse of linguistic authority tied to racial hierarchies, expressed by participants across multiple interviews. This ensures that the critical engagement with the data is robust and tied systematically to broader ideological frameworks. Thus, the CTA framework allowed for a critical, reflective, and thorough engagement with the data, minimizing the risk of cherry-picking and enabling a grounded, systematic examination of race, power, and language in Pakistan's ELT sector. The three major themes—

Distribution of Racial Discourse in the Data

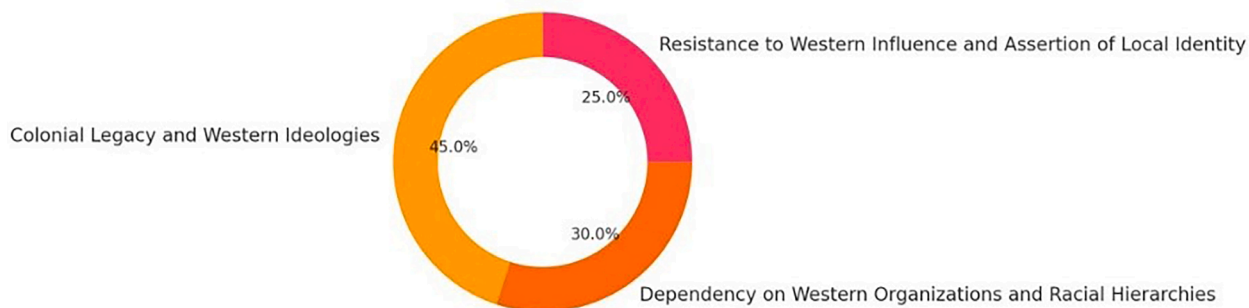


Fig. 2. Frequency of themes in data.

1. Colonial Legacies and Western Ideologies
2. Dependency on Western Organizations and Racial Hierarchies
3. Resistance to Western Influence and Assertion of Local Identity— are thus the outcome of a careful and systematically applied methodology that ensures the findings remain firmly rooted in the data while critically engaging with the broader historical and ideological forces shaping ELT in Pakistan. Notably, these themes are far from mutually exclusive; rather, they intersect and overlap in complex ways. The following figure shows the frequency of each theme:

The chart above, represents the distribution of racial discourse across three central themes within the data, reflecting a nuanced engagement with colonial legacies, dependency on Western organizations, and resistance to Western influence. *Colonial Legacy and Western Ideologies* constitutes the largest portion at 45 %, highlighting the entrenched impact of colonial education policies and the dominance of English as a marker of quality in Pakistan’s ELT sector. *Dependency on Western Organizations and Racial Hierarchies*, comprising 30 % of the data, highlights the pervasive reliance on foreign institutions like the British Council and USIS, reinforcing racial hierarchies and sustaining external control over local education. Meanwhile, *Resistance to Western Influence and Assertion of Local Identity*, though representing a smaller portion at 25 %, reveals a critical shift toward reclaiming local languages and cultural autonomy in educational practices. The proportional distribution reflects a contested space where colonial legacies still hold significant sway, but where localized efforts to challenge these dynamics are gradually emerging.

More importantly, the excerpts selected for detailed analysis were not mere random choices; they were exemplary, reflecting the broader trends in the dataset and effectively demonstrating the identified themes. Each excerpt offers an exploration of how members of SPELT and LAP articulate racial ideologies within the context of English language teaching (ELT) in Pakistan, shedding light on the ways these ideologies, intertwined with historical and colonial discourses, continue to structure racial inequalities. By critically engaging with the ideological forces that position English as a language of power, the interviews uncover how ELT practices perpetuate colonial hierarchies, shaping social and political identities in ways that reinforce systemic inequities.

1. Colonial legacies and western ideologies

Under this theme, the participants reflected on how English, as a remnant of British colonialism, has become synonymous with quality education, reinforcing racial and linguistic hierarchies that marginalize indigenous languages. The alignment of English with progress and modernity perpetuates Western dominance, positioning it as a gateway to academic and social mobility while simultaneously devaluing local languages. In conjunction with historical colonial discourses, these ideologies sustain systemic racial inequalities within Pakistan’s ELT sector, where English is upheld as the language of power and privilege, further entrenching socio-linguistic divides. For instance, in the following excerpt 1, the participant focused on psychological internalization of inferiority due to colonial legacies, highlighting the emotional and mental impact of this racial dynamic. The psychological dimension highlights the enduring influence of colonialism, where race and professional legitimacy remain intertwined, reinforcing racial hierarchies within Pakistani ELT.

Excerpt 1:

“We have some problems, psychological, inferiority complex as a nation, we are really not confident enough, our confidence level is never good and we feel, that if there is a pure White man can do that, or any authentic person again from a very White man and someone who speaks English with a specific accent it is with us then we do things with their support, so people from my region are little brown even if they do quality work but are never regarded and recognized. I also remember, one of the experts for our conferences was XYZ. He was known as the authority over linguistics. His mother was British, and he was quite a white man. His English was excellent, and our language skills were not like him. We asked him to come because of his credibility being

English. I mean we were not authentic enough, as we were known as locals and are as such not regarded as an authority or internationally acclaimed people."(LAP/F/7)⁴

The excerpt critically reflects the internalization of racialized hierarchies within Pakistan's ELT sector, closely aligning with the naturalization of race and language as discussed by Flores and Rosa (2015) and Alim (2016). The speaker's reference to a "psychological inferiority complex as a nation" underscores a raciolinguistic self-perception that privileges whiteness, particularly when linked to English proficiency. This internalized hierarchy is not merely personal but systemic, rooted in colonial legacies that continue to shape language education in postcolonial Pakistan. As Alim (2016) and Flores and Rosa (2015) emphasize, the colonial distinctions between European and non-European languages persist, reinforcing whiteness and English as markers of linguistic authenticity and expertise. This reflects a broader global pattern, as noted by Motha (2014) and Bacon (2019), where white English speakers are positioned as linguistic ideals, marginalizing non-white professionals.

The speaker's depiction of the "pure White man" as inherently credible and the emphasis on "authentic English" being tied to specific accents illustrate the dynamics of the white listening subject, a concept central to Flores and Rosa's (2015) critique. In Pakistan's ELT framework, local professionals are positioned as linguistically inferior, regardless of their expertise, due to the racialized expectations that equate whiteness with linguistic competence. This raciolinguistic inequality is reinforced by the statement that "people from my region are little brown" and therefore "never regarded or recognized," reflecting how colonial epistemologies continue to shape professional recognition and authority in Pakistan. Studies by Stillar (2022) and Baker-Bell (2020) further corroborate the stigmatization of racialized linguistic identities, which perpetuate whiteness as the linguistic norm. Moreover, the reference to an expert whose "mother was British" and who was "quite a white man" highlights how racialized authority is constructed through whiteness. This aligns with Alim's (2016) argument that linguistic competence is racialized and linked to colonial power structures, where the expert's whiteness elevates his status in the Pakistani context. Local professionals, regardless of their qualifications, are denied legitimacy because they are not seen as racially or linguistically "authentic." This reflects Motha (2016) and Phillipson's (1992) discussions of linguistic imperialism, where whiteness and native English-speaking abilities are upheld as global standards, thereby marginalizing non-Western expertise.

The speaker's language, which describes local professionals as "not authentic enough" because they are "known as locals," reveals the deeply ingrained coloniality that devalues indigenous knowledge in favor of Western epistemologies, as Wynter (2003) argues. This perpetuates the historical discourse of colonialism, positioning European knowledge and linguistic standards as superior and sustaining structural inequalities in Pakistan's ELT sector. As Flores and Rosa (2015), Alim (2016), and Almeida (2015) assert, such raciolinguistic ideologies reinforce Western and white dominance in global education, where non-Western scholars are often seen as illegitimate. The excerpt further exposes how English proficiency is racialized in Pakistan, with Western accents being considered markers of "authenticity" and "credibility." This supports Flores and Rosa's (2015) critique of linguistic authority, where non-native speakers, particularly from colonized regions, are measured against racialized standards. The linguistic hierarchy this creates ensures that local Pakistani professionals are perpetually seen as lacking, aligning with Bacon's (2019) argument that whiteness remains the unmarked norm in global ELT. Thus, the excerpt reveals how colonial ideologies persist, maintaining racial and linguistic hierarchies that privilege whiteness and marginalize non-Western voices in Pakistan's language education system.

A similar perspective was conveyed by another participant, as seen in excerpt 2, which highlights the psychological imprints of racial ideologies that prioritize Western expertise within Pakistan's ELT sector. This perspective reveals how deeply ingrained beliefs about Western superiority shape the field, where global educational exchanges perpetuate the colonial hierarchies of knowledge and authority. The participant's view underscores how internalized raciolinguistic ideologies reinforce the dominance of Western pedagogical models, sustaining a global racial order that marginalizes local expertise and reproduces systemic inequalities within the ELT landscape.

Excerpt 2:

"You attend sessions on teaching, especially of people who are basically English, from USA, UK, or Australia, but they are teaching and training in underdeveloped countries like Indonesia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. They share experiences on how to overcome ELT issues especially in countries like us. These kinds of sessions are really enlightening especially when somebody who has authentic English background talks about them. They are extremely helpful, and you can understand and relate with them better. This year XYZ was there, an international white speaker, we ensured that she comes to Pakistan. She gave excellent talks on sessions. She spoke on a couple of sessions. Last year we also had another person here from the UK." (SPELT/F/15)

The excerpt demonstrates the deep-rooted psychological impact of raciolinguistic hierarchies on the speaker's perception of Western expertise in Pakistan's ELT sector. The speaker's language in the excerpt also reveals a clear division between countries, creating a psychological hierarchy that further reinforces colonial and raciolinguistic ideologies. By grouping the UK, USA, and Australia together as representatives of "authentic" English and contrasting them with "underdeveloped countries" like Pakistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, the speaker reproduces a colonial binary of superiority and inferiority. The speaker's use of the term "underdeveloped countries" reinforces the notion of the Global South as perpetually lacking, a space that requires guidance from the West to "overcome ELT issues." This framing perpetuates what Flores and Rosa (2015) describe as a racialized global order, where Western countries are seen as possessing inherent linguistic and educational authority, while countries like Pakistan are seen as

⁴ LAP=Affiliation with Association, F=Female, 7= interview No.

deficient and incapable of resolving their own educational challenges without external, Western help. The repeated reference to the "authentic English background" of trainers from Western countries reflects this deeply embedded hierarchy, linking whiteness and Western English not only to linguistic competence but also to intellectual and pedagogical superiority. Furthermore, by describing the sessions led by these Western professionals as "enlightening" and "extremely helpful," the speaker constructs a psychological hierarchy in which local knowledge and expertise are automatically devalued. This internalized colonial mentality, where local professionals are considered less capable or knowledgeable, aligns with Alim's (2016) concept of the co-naturalization of race and language, which continues to shape how linguistic authority is perceived in postcolonial contexts. The speaker's positioning of Western trainers as inherently better able to "understand and relate" to local ELT issues perpetuates the colonial logic that the Global South must rely on Western expertise to resolve its own challenges, thereby maintaining the racialized power dynamics embedded in linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992).

Moreover, the speaker's excitement about ensuring the participation of an "international white speaker" underscores the racialized hierarchy in ELT, where whiteness is explicitly linked to expertise and legitimacy. This dynamic mirrors what Flores and Rosa (2015) describe as the racialization of language competence, where linguistic proficiency is evaluated against the racialized standards of Western English. The speaker's reliance on Western trainers as the only credible source of ELT solutions illustrates how local professionals are consistently positioned as inferior, regardless of their actual expertise. This further reinforces the colonial legacy in Pakistan's ELT sector, where the co-naturalization of race and language sustains structural inequalities (Motha, 2014). The speaker's framing of Western experts as better suited to address local issues is also indicative of the internalized colonial mentality, which devalues indigenous knowledge and reinforces a unidirectional flow of knowledge from the West to postcolonial contexts. This not only perpetuates the exclusion of local voices but also reflects a broader global racial order that sustains the dominance of whiteness in ELT, as discussed by Hudley et al. (2020). Therefore, the excerpt exemplifies how raciolinguistic ideologies continue to reproduce racial inequalities in Pakistan's ELT sector, maintaining whiteness as the unmarked standard for linguistic and professional competence.

2. Dependency on western organizations and racial hierarchies

This theme highlights how Pakistan's reliance on Western institutions, such as the British Council and US State Department, entrenches racial hierarchies and limits local autonomy in ELT development. By perpetuating a neocolonial dynamic, Western control over funding and educational projects undermines local agency, reinforcing Western dominance and marginalizing indigenous voices. This dependency not only sustains systemic power imbalances but also reinforces racialized perceptions of competence, positioning Western expertise as superior and essential, thereby constraining Pakistan's capacity for independent educational reform. This is exemplified in the following excerpt 3.

Excerpt 3:

"These days, the British Council has almost all its projects in Punjab, so they have shifted their major work there due to government support. First, we paid a lot of attention to UGC, and we wanted to be patrons of UGC support for such trainings. But then we realized that we had to be an independent body, not subservient to the British Council or the State Department." (SPELT/F/1)

The speaker's use of the term "subservient" in this excerpt reveals the entrenched raciolinguistic hierarchies and neocolonial power dynamics that shape Pakistan's ELT landscape. This word encapsulates the perceived dependency on Western institutions like the British Council and U.S. State Department, reinforcing the notion that Western expertise is seen as both linguistically and racially superior. Flores and Rosa (2015) critically address how non-Western professionals are positioned as inherently deficient, regardless of their abilities. The speaker's earlier desire to be "patrons" of Western-backed projects reflects an internalized inferiority, where local legitimacy is contingent upon Western validation. Further, the speaker's realization that independence must be achieved highlights the raciolinguistic dynamics at play. The admission that their institution must break free from Western subordination demonstrates an acute awareness of the racialized power relations that have long dictated Pakistan's educational development. However, this recognition of neocolonial dependency is not just institutional but deeply raciolinguistic, illustrating how local professionals are evaluated against white, Western standards. This dynamic perpetuates the belief that local expertise lacks authenticity unless endorsed by Western institutions, as Alim (2016) highlights in his work on the co-naturalization of race and language in postcolonial contexts.

The phrase "government support" signals a critique of racialized spatial politics within Pakistan, where regions like Punjab, aligned with Western priorities, receive more attention and resources. This aligns with Rahman's (2004) critique of how Punjabi dominance has historically marginalized regional identities and languages, reinforcing a colonial hierarchy that privileges Western linguistic authority. The British Council's focus on Punjab further deepens regional inequalities, illustrating the spatial dimensions of neocolonial influence. The participant's resistance to this subservience reflects the colonial legacy of relying on Western aid and educational frameworks. The speaker's critique aligns with Abdullah and Akhtar's (2019) analysis of how organizations like UK Aid and DFID perpetuate neocolonial dependency under the guise of financial aid. While these contributions may appear beneficial, they reinforce racialized hierarchies that limit local autonomy and position Western expertise as essential for progress. Thus, this excerpt illustrates how the language used by the speaker captures the raciolinguistic ideologies that continue to privilege Western authority and marginalize local expertise. The speaker's critique of subservience illustrates a growing awareness of the need to resist these racialized power structures, yet the framing of this as an ongoing process reflects the enduring colonial legacy that continues to shape Pakistan's educational landscape.

Another participant echoed this perspective in excerpt 4, highlighting how reliance on Western institutions like the British Council and U.S. State Department perpetuates a system in which control and recognition remain with foreign organizations. This dependency reinforces raciolinguistic hierarchies, marginalizing local voices and maintaining Western dominance in Pakistan's ELT sector.

Excerpt 4:

"The nature of the job, either USIS or British Council, it's not followed through, then it could be done through their (referring to USIS and British Council) ways. US State Department, British Council—off and on with their support, sponsored for twenty years or so. It was taken for granted that British Council was taking credit for British-sponsored speakers, but then the policy was changed." (SPELT/F/9)

The excerpt reveals the deeply entrenched raciolinguistic ideologies that sustain neocolonial dependencies within Pakistan's ELT sector, particularly the dominance of Western institutions such as the British Council and the U.S. State Department. The speaker's phrase "taken for granted" encapsulates the passive acceptance of Western hegemony, reflecting the internalization of colonial legacies that continue to shape educational policy and linguistic authority. This linguistic choice is not incidental, but indicative of a power dynamic where local actors are compelled to defer to foreign control without contest, mirroring Flores and Rosa's (2015) critique of raciolinguistic ideologies that racialize non-Western voices as inherently deficient. The speaker's casual reference to Western institutions—"either USIS or British Council"—highlights the interchangeable dominance of these bodies, underscoring the systemic nature of Western control in determining educational standards. This reveals a deeper racialized framework in which Western linguistic norms are imposed as the unchallenged benchmark of authority, sustaining the perception of Western knowledge as superior and local expertise as marginal.

The expression "off and on" regarding Western support further emphasizes the precarious and conditional nature of this neocolonial relationship, exposing the selective engagement of Western institutions. This intermittent involvement forces local ELT professionals into a state of dependency, continually recalibrating their practices to align with shifting Western priorities. The structural fragility embedded in this phrase reflects a broader critique of how neocolonial powers maintain dominance without offering consistent or meaningful contributions, aligning with Flores and Rosa's (2015) argument on appropriateness-based models where legitimacy is externally validated by Western standards. The speaker's mention of the British Council "taking credit" for bringing speakers underscores the monopolization of recognition by Western entities. This phrase exposes the epistemic violence inherent in the neo-colonial framework, where local contributions are overshadowed or erased in favor of Western accomplishments. Alim's (2016) concept of cultural hegemony is reflected here, illustrating how Western institutions control not only linguistic practices but also the narrative of progress, further entrenching racial hierarchies in the global ELT sector.

The passive construction "it was taken for granted" also reveals a sense of resignation, indicating that supposed policy changes have not disrupted the structural inequalities in Pakistan's ELT development. The superficiality of these reforms, which fail to address the underlying neo-colonial power dynamics, reflects Flores and Rosa's (2017) critique of raciolinguistic ideologies that persist despite policy modifications. The temporal marker "twenty years or so" emphasizes the enduring influence of Western control, suggesting that this prolonged dominance has only solidified the racialized hierarchies within Pakistan's ELT system. This enduring neo-colonial presence perpetuates the marginalization of local voices, reinforcing the systemic privileging of Western standards as the ultimate measure of linguistic and professional competence. Thus, the excerpt exemplifies how colonial legacies continue to structure racial and linguistic inequalities, maintaining the dominance of Western authority in Pakistan's ELT sector.

3. Resistance to western influence and assertion of local identity

This theme explores the dynamics surrounding Western influence in Pakistan's ELT development, focusing on discussions around local agency and control. It engages with the debate over the role of external funding and the potential implications for shaping local educational agendas. The discourse considers the significance of culturally relevant curricula, teacher empowerment, and the role of linguistic diversity within the educational framework. These reflections point to broader considerations of decolonizing ELT practices and shaping an education system that resonates with Pakistan's sociocultural realities. Such a point of view was expressed by one of the participants in the following excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5:

"We were very clear that we are not going to take funding from anyone, because as soon as you take somebody's funds, they (funders) want to follow their own agenda. We need to help ourselves. Indigenized knowledge is the best one. Again, the point is why foreign forces come and help us, as we are incapacitated." (SPELT/F/18)

The excerpt presents a complex interplay between resistance to neocolonial influences and an internalized sense of incapacity, revealing significant tensions in Pakistan's ELT sector. The speaker's initial declaration—"We were very clear that we are not going to take funding from anyone"—asserts a defiant resistance to external control, emphasizing a desire for autonomy. This refusal to accept foreign funds is framed as a rejection of the "agenda" imposed by funders, a clear critique of how financial aid often comes with the expectation of compliance with external, predominantly Western, priorities. This stance aligns with a broader postcolonial critique of how funding is used as a tool to perpetuate neocolonial influence, echoing Flores and Rosa's (2015) argument that Western institutions often use such mechanisms to sustain raciolinguistic hierarchies by controlling the direction of educational practices.

However, the language used by the speaker reveals a paradox: while resisting external intervention, there is an implicit recognition of dependency and powerlessness encapsulated in the phrase, "we are incapacitated." This admission of incapacity undermines the earlier assertion of independence, creating a discursive tension between the desire for self-reliance and the acknowledgment of internal limitations. The juxtaposition of this perceived incapacity with the call for "indigenized knowledge" underscores the ambivalence within the speaker's stance. On the one hand, the speaker advocates for the valorization of local, culturally relevant knowledge—"indigenized knowledge is the best one"—which reflects a strong postcolonial resistance to the imposition of foreign pedagogical models and mirrors what Mignolo (2012) describes as "epistemic disobedience." Yet, on the other hand, the reliance on the term "incapacitated" points to the internalization of colonial ideologies that have long portrayed postcolonial nations as dependent and

inferior, unable to progress without Western intervention.

The language of incapacity also engages with Flores and Rosa's (2015) critique of raciolinguistic ideologies, where non-Western voices are often racialized and rendered deficient in comparison to Western expertise. By framing the issue as one of incapacity, the speaker inadvertently reinforces the very dependency they seek to reject. This paradox highlights the deep psychological impact of colonialism, where the desire for autonomy is tempered by a lingering belief in the inherent superiority of foreign intervention. Furthermore, the rhetorical question, "why foreign forces come and help us?" reflects a critique of the historical paternalism embedded in Western aid, which often positions the Global South as perpetually in need of rescue, thereby sustaining the racialized global order. Ultimately, the excerpt reveals a complex and layered discourse of resistance intertwined with internalized colonial ideologies. The speaker's rejection of foreign funding demonstrates a critical awareness of neocolonial control, yet the simultaneous expression of incapacity underscores the persistent psychological impact of colonial subjugation. This discursive tension reflects the ongoing struggle within postcolonial contexts like Pakistan to assert independence while grappling with the legacies of colonialism that continue to shape perceptions of self and capacity in global ELT practices.

A similar stance on resistance to foreign educational models and the assertion of local identity was echoed by another participant in excerpt 6, who emphasized the importance of rejecting external agendas in educational development.

Excerpt 6:

"We want to incorporate local wisdom and the culture of the area into the curriculum, whether it's in their mother tongue, Urdu, or English. You know, children from mountain areas have never seen kangaroos, so how can you teach them about such things? The curriculum must be local for their day-to-day life."(LAP/M/22)

The excerpt offers a profound critique of the disconnect between foreign educational models and the lived realities of students in Pakistan, while also presenting a nuanced form of resistance to the imposition of culturally irrelevant curricula. The speaker's insistence on integrating "local wisdom and the culture of the area" into the curriculum reflects a clear rejection of Western-centric educational paradigms that fail to acknowledge or respect the diversity of local contexts. This stance aligns with Mignolo's (2012) concept of "epistemic disobedience," as the speaker advocates for an education system that actively resists the dominance of foreign knowledge structures in favor of localized, culturally grounded content. The speaker's choice of language, particularly the emphasis on "local wisdom" and "culture of the area," suggests a deliberate effort to challenge the hegemonic knowledge systems that have historically devalued indigenous epistemologies. By emphasizing the need for a curriculum that reflects local realities—whether in the "mother tongue, Urdu, or English"—the speaker highlights the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity in education. This resistance is particularly significant in the postcolonial context, where global educational standards are often dictated by Western nations, marginalizing local languages and knowledge systems (Flores & Rosa, 2015).

Furthermore, the speaker's critique of teaching irrelevant content, exemplified by the statement, "children from mountain areas have never seen kangaroos," serves as a metaphor for the broader cultural disconnect that foreign curricula impose. The imagery of the kangaroo—a distant, foreign animal—symbolizes the absurdity of teaching content that has no resonance with the students' day-to-day lives. This critique reveals the speaker's awareness of the cultural erasure embedded in standardized curricula, where students are disconnected from their own cultural contexts, reflecting a form of symbolic violence that Bourdieu (1991) identifies in the imposition of dominant knowledge systems. The question "how can you teach them about such things?" reflects a deeper critique of the broader educational policies that prioritize global, often Western, content over local knowledge, reinforcing Flores and Rosa's (2015) argument that raciolinguistic ideologies continue to shape educational hierarchies by privileging Western norms. The speaker's call for the curriculum to "be local for their day-to-day life" represents a resistance not only to the content but to the epistemological framework underlying the entire educational system. This resistance challenges the colonial logic that positions Western knowledge as universally applicable and superior. By advocating for an education that is grounded in the everyday realities of the students, the speaker implicitly rejects the notion that knowledge must be imported from the Global North to be legitimate. This critique aligns with Phillipson's (1992) theory of linguistic imperialism, which argues that the dominance of English in global education systems perpetuates neo-colonial power dynamics, marginalizing local voices and knowledge.

However, the speaker's mention of Urdu and English alongside local languages introduces a more nuanced layer of resistance. While advocating for the inclusion of local wisdom, the speaker's reference to Urdu and English reflects the complex postcolonial realities of language politics in Pakistan. Urdu, as the national language, and English, as a colonial legacy, hold significant power in the country's education system. Even in the call for decolonization, there remains a tension between the desire to valorise local languages and the practical reliance on national and global languages as vehicles of instruction. This tension reveals the paradox inherent in the resistance: while the speaker advocates for an indigenized curriculum, the inclusion of Urdu and English underscores the continued dominance of these languages, reflecting the complex entanglement of resistance and conformity within postcolonial education systems. Thus, the excerpt reflects a multi-layered resistance to both the content and structure of foreign educational models while coping with the complexities of linguistic and cultural politics in a postcolonial context. The speaker's language reflects an acute awareness of the need to decolonize education, but also reveals the challenges of navigating the persistent legacies of colonialism that shape contemporary educational practices in Pakistan.

3. Discussion

The findings of this study illuminate the complex interplay of colonial legacies, raciolinguistic ideologies, and neoliberal frameworks within Pakistan's English Language Teaching (ELT) sector. Far from being neutral or simply functional, English operates as a potent mechanism for reinforcing racial, linguistic, and class-based hierarchies, all while marginalizing indigenous languages and

knowledge systems. These findings demand a critical interrogation of how global and local power dynamics intersect to sustain systemic inequalities in Pakistan's ELT development, highlighting the entrenched influence of Western ideologies and racialized language practices.

A central theme that emerges from the data is the persistent influence of colonial legacies in shaping perceptions of language and identity within Pakistan's education system. English, as a colonial remnant, continues to function as both a symbol of progress and a tool of marginalization. This duality reveals the internalization of colonial discourses, where English is not only a language of global mobility but also a marker of racial superiority, privileging those who embody Western linguistic norms. As [Kubota and Lin \(2006\)](#) argue, the racialization of language through the lens of whiteness upholds English as the linguistic property of the West, where non-Western speakers are positioned as inherently deficient. The internalization of this hierarchy by local educators, as demonstrated in this study, reflects [Mignolo's \(2012\)](#) notion of epistemic hegemony, where the colonial mentality continues to frame non-Western knowledge and language as inferior. This dynamic is evident in the participants' reflections on their own sense of professional inferiority in comparison to their white, Western counterparts, illustrating how colonial ideologies have left deep psychological imprints on Pakistan's ELT sector.

Furthermore, these findings underscore the role of raciolinguistic ideologies in perpetuating systemic inequalities. As [Flores and Rosa \(2023\)](#) contend, language is not merely a neutral medium of communication but a site of racialization, where linguistic practices are evaluated through a racialized lens. In Pakistan's ELT sector, Western speakers—particularly those racialized as white—are regarded as the ultimate authorities on English, while local professionals, regardless of their expertise, are marginalized. The participants' deference to Western expertise, particularly their emphasis on the credibility of white, native English speakers, exemplifies how the "white listening subject" shapes linguistic hierarchies. In this framework, the mere presence of a Western accent or appearance is enough to confer authority, while local educators are viewed as lacking authenticity or legitimacy. This co-naturalization of race and language, as [Alim \(2016\)](#) describes, reinforces colonial distinctions between European and non-European languages, maintaining a raciolinguistic order where whiteness and English are intertwined.

The findings also reveal the deep-rooted dependency on Western organizations, such as the British Council and U.S. State Department, which perpetuates neo-colonial power dynamics within Pakistan's ELT development. As [Phillipson \(1992\)](#) has argued, linguistic imperialism is not only about the spread of English but about the control over who teaches it and how it is taught. In Pakistan, the reliance on Western funding and expertise reflects a broader neo-colonial dependency, where local institutions are forced to conform to Western standards to receive validation and support. This dynamic is particularly evident in the participants' critique of how foreign organizations dictate the terms of educational policy and practice, reinforcing the racialized hierarchy that privileges Western knowledge over local voices. [Rahman \(2004\)](#) and [Akram and Mahmood \(2007\)](#) have similarly noted how this dependency not only limits local agency but also sustains systemic inequalities by positioning Western expertise as essential for progress. In this context, Pakistan's ELT sector remains trapped in a cycle of neo-colonial subordination, where local autonomy is continually undermined by external forces that control both the resources and the narratives of success.

However, this study also reveals moments of resistance, where participants advocate for a more localized and culturally relevant approach to ELT. By calling for curricula that reflect "local wisdom" and "the culture of the area," participants are challenging the homogenizing forces of Western educational models. This resistance aligns with [Mignolo's \(2012\)](#) concept of "epistemic disobedience," where non-Western communities refuse to conform to the knowledge hierarchies imposed by Western modernity. The demand for an indigenized curriculum reflects a growing awareness of the need to decolonize ELT practices and create an education system that is responsive to Pakistan's sociocultural realities. Yet, as the findings suggest, this resistance is fraught with tension. The lingering psychological effects of colonialism, as seen in participants' acknowledgment of their own "incapacitation" in relation to Western powers, reveal how deeply entrenched colonial mentalities continue to shape local perceptions of expertise and autonomy. Moreover, the commodification of English within neoliberal frameworks further complicates this resistance. [Harvey \(2007\)](#) and [Sewell \(2016\)](#) argue that under neoliberalism, language becomes a commodity that can be bought, sold, and used as a tool for global mobility. In Pakistan, English functions as a gatekeeper to social and economic advancement, reinforcing class-based and racial inequalities. This commodification is evident in the participants' reflections on the role of Western organizations in shaping ELT practices, where the dominance of English is not only a linguistic issue but also an economic one. English, particularly when spoken with a Western accent, is seen as a marker of privilege, while local languages and knowledge systems are devalued. The findings illustrate how the neoliberal logic of commodification intersects with colonial legacies to sustain a raciolinguistic hierarchy that privileges Western linguistic norms and marginalizes non-Western voices. The racialized commodification of English is also reflected in the participants' focus on the psychological impact of these global linguistic hierarchies. The sense of inferiority expressed by local educators, who feel that their contributions are "never regarded or recognized," highlights the epistemic violence enacted by these global relationships. As [Kendi \(2019\)](#) and [DiAngelo \(2022\)](#) have argued, racial hierarchies are not just about material power but also about the psychological and emotional impacts of systemic racism. In Pakistan's ELT sector, the internalization of racialized linguistic hierarchies perpetuates a sense of professional inadequacy, where local voices are consistently marginalized in favor of Western expertise. Significantly, this study argues that whiteness is not simply a matter of skin color but a construct of power, as [Kendi \(2019\)](#) asserts. Whiteness, and the privileges it confers, are maintained through exclusionary mechanisms that deny non-white individuals' full access, even if they attain linguistic proficiency or professional credentials in English. The participants' experiences illustrate this unattainability: no matter how proficient in English, local educators remain outside the boundaries of whiteness, as [Ramjattan \(2019\)](#) argues. This unattainable ideal of whiteness mirrors broader patterns of racial exclusion, where English language proficiency becomes a proxy for racial hierarchies, maintaining the supremacy of white, Western norms within the ELT sector ([Alim et al., 2016](#)).

The implications of this study extend beyond Pakistan, offering critical insights into how raciolinguistic ideologies and colonial legacies continue to shape language education in both Global North and postcolonial contexts. In the Global North, where English

remains the hegemonic linguistic standard, this study reinforces the need to interrogate how linguistic practices are racialized, particularly through the privileging of whiteness as the idealized norm in English language teaching. The persistence of the “white listening subject” (Flores & Rosa, 2015) in evaluating linguistic competence underscores the reproduction of racial inequalities within educational systems, where non-Western English speakers are marginalized regardless of their expertise. This dynamic, as the study shows, is deeply rooted in historical colonialism and perpetuated by neoliberal frameworks that commodify English as a global asset.

In Pakistan, and similarly situated postcolonial contexts, the study highlights the urgent need for a decolonization of English language teaching (ELT) frameworks that currently reinforce racial and linguistic inequalities. The dependency on Western organizations like the British Council and the U.S. State Department not only perpetuates a neo-colonial order but also stifles local autonomy in developing culturally relevant curricula and pedagogical practices. This reinforces the global racial order where the knowledge and expertise of non-Western professionals are consistently devalued. These implications point to the need for educational reforms that prioritize local knowledge, empower indigenous languages, and resist the commodification of English within neoliberal frameworks. For postcolonial nations, such as Pakistan, challenging these entrenched ideologies is essential to fostering a more equitable and inclusive education system that reflects the sociocultural realities of its people rather than adhering to Western linguistic standards that sustain historical inequalities. The findings of the study call for a global rethinking of linguistic hierarchies that continue to marginalize local voices and knowledge systems, even in an era purportedly characterized by linguistic inclusivity and globalization.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Rukhsana Ali: Writing – review & editing, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Rauha Salam-Salmaoui:** Writing – original draft.

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