

## REPRODUCTION OF LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE IN SOUTHERN PUNJAB

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This study aimed to explore the reproduction of linguistic competence in southern Punjab, Pakistan. The study used a sample of 690 respondents who were selected through stratified random sampling technique from the region. The study explored that the respondents from disadvantaged family background in the region used to speak local dialects i.e. Sraiki and Punjabi, in their homes and they have common parlance. However, the respondents from advantaged family background used to speak Urdu and English language in their homes and they have bourgeois parlance. The study concluded that linguistic competence is unequally distributed in the region, which is reproduced from one generation to the next.

**Keywords:** reproduction, social positions, linguistic competence, English, Urdu

**1. Introduction**

English competence as a symbol of status is prominent in almost all countries who have been British colonies. Haeri (1997) found that English language is the language of upper class in Egypt, whereas the official language of the country is Arabic. Montaut (2004) claimed that English is the language of dominant class in India. In Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, it also has same status. Similarly, it is the language of dominant people in Pakistan especially Bureaucrats, army officers, politicians, etc. (Amir, 2008; Rahman, 2008). It is the status symbol of upper class as a form of dominant culture because privileged class socializes their members through private schools where English language is the mode of communication, lecture and documentation (Yaqoob and Zubair, 2012).

English is official language in Pakistan thus has its prime importance in every official procedure. In universities it is pedagogic language, whereas Urdu is national language of the country and widely used for official and unofficial communication. Although, Supreme Court of Pakistan has verdict that Urdu should be used for all official documentation by September 8, 2015 under article 251 of The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan [CIRP] 1973 yet the decision did not supersede the practice of English in official documentation. The article reads:

- (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 leaching, promotion and use of a Provincial language in addition to the National language”.

Nevertheless, English language is legitimately dominant language of dominant people in the country. It has been evident by previous studies that higher education is related with higher-level occupation, similarly, English competence is mandatory to secure higher-level job in Pakistan (Manan, et al., 2016) because it is the language of instruction in universities.

Further, English language is also related with power – those who used to speak the language are exposed to higher-level occupations, income and wealth. Williams and Chaston (2004) identified the relationship of linguistic ability with success in business. Fujio (2014) concluded that businesspersons with high linguistic proficiency chair the business meetings, which also indicated career success in business. Similarly, in education sector, the language also bestows power and privilege to students. Streib (2011) used observational analysis to comprehend class reproduction among four years old students in school. Drawing upon Bourdieu’s (1991) postulate that “language bestows power”, she explored how symbolic power attached to language represents class in classroom. She explored that student from privileged family background used explanatory language skills to restrain students from disadvantaged family background to use the skill. Further, they also used language ability to resolve disputes over toys. Therefore, students from advantaged family background reproduced their symbolic power which was attached to their use of language.

In case of Pakistan, Yaqoob and Zubair (2012) found in a comparative study of Punjab Textbook Board (PTB) and Oxford University Press (OUP) curriculum in Punjab that those students who studied OUP curriculum got easy access to power because OUP curriculum is centered on western discourse and being taught in elite schools. Malik (2012) explored how different school systems i.e., English medium, Urdu medium and Deeni Maddaris contributed to reproduce social hierarchies. His study concluded that dominant class tended to transfer and reproduce their power, privilege and prestige through English medium schools. Although, working and middle-class parents invest their economic and cultural capital in their children’s education yet their class conditions remained unable to transfer aspirations of success in children. Interestingly, when Khattak (2014) studied these three mainstream school systems, his findings were consistent with Malik (2012).

Such power of the language makes it a capital. Bourdieu (1984) called it linguistic capital. He is of the view that linguistic capital is unequally distributed in society because individual with higher resources have higher advantages to acquire higher and elite education wherein, they accumulate higher-level linguistic capital such as English or literary Urdu language.

However, individuals with lower level of resources are unable to access such resources. Therefore, linguistic ability is associated with higher social and economic positions as well with power. Further, Bourdieu (1984, 1986) also argued that such families reproduced unequal distribution of linguistic capital. Children from advantaged family background are highly likely to acquire higher education, whereas children from disadvantaged family background do not even have access to higher education. Thus, advantaged family background and education system reproduced the structure of unequal distribution of linguistic capital. In this study, we attempted to explore the reproduction of linguistic capital in south Punjab.

## 2. Methodology

The study was conducted in Sothern Punjab. We collected data from 690 respondents from the region through stratified random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was distributed across 14 selected social positions (see figure 1). From each social position, 50 respondents were included in the study. However, ten factory owners were excluded due to their incomplete responses on the questionnaire.

It is important to mention that only eloquence does not matter rather reading, writing and listening competence is also highly important in linguistic capital. In other words, Bourdieu termed it, linguistic competence: an instrument to comprehend complete code of language especially university language (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, p. 115) but this competence is unequally distributed because the level of linguistic competence shows “relation to language”, thereby, social characteristics determine that what language an acquirer of language articulates (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, p. 116).

Similarly, in Pakistan, specifically in Punjab province, English language is one of the upper-class characteristics to reflect status quo that middle class idealizes while sourcing educational and occupational ventures to acquire this expensive resource – highly expensive schooling is specialized to transmit this resource to students that lower class students are unable to afford. Furthermore, unequal educational system in Punjab (characterized by variegated curriculum, pedagogic specialization, fee structure, etc.) is function of the unequal distribution of linguistic competence i.e., transmission of English language and communication with the intentions of its internalization in students which is essentially demanded by universities and higher-level jobs. Henceforth, operationalization of linguistic competence should also be suitably designed so that it could confirm its theoretical and empirical validity. Therefore, we asked respondents and their father to rate their speaking, reading, writing and listening ability of English language on five points Likert scale, ranged from 0 = unable to 4 = excellent (Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.971, items = 12). The reliability statistics of the measurement of respondents (Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.980) and their father (Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.990) are satisfactory. Bourdieu (1984) explained importance of language being aware of its distinctive use, not commonly, in classes where decoding of same language tends to vary, mostly opposite and even antagonistic (p. 194). Therefore, he argued that there are two modes of language with respect to “relation to language” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, p. 115):

1. Bourgeois parlance
2. Common parlance

We classified measurement of English language competence into these two modes of language numerically. Lower language competence is given lower score such as poor and medium language competence, codified 1 and 2 respectively. Whereas good and excellent linguistic competence is given 3 and 4 value respectively. Those who were not aware of the language were given 0 = Unable value. In order to convert linguistic competence into bourgeois and common parlance, the scores were computed and divided into common (1 to 8) and Bourgeois parlance (9-18). However, those who were not aware of the language (unable = 0) made a separate category.

We also measured the type of language respondents usually speak at home such as Urdu, Punjabi, Saraiki, etc. Education of respondents and their father was measured through their last degree. Family income was measured through open-ended question, which was codified by the interval of 50000 PKR per month. These variables were used in Multiple Correspondence analysis (MCA) to explore linguistic reproduction.

## 3. Results

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of English language competence of respondents and their father

English Language	Unable		Poor		Medium		Good		Excellent	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
<b>Respondent</b>										
Reading	131	19.0	82	11.9	99	14.3	220	31.9	158	22.9
Writing	128	18.6	87	12.6	111	16.1	223	32.3	141	20.4
Speaking	146	21.2	99	14.3	115	16.7	208	30.1	122	17.7
Listening	141	20.4	92	13.3	98	14.2	207	30.0	152	22.0
<b>Father</b>										
Reading	289	41.9	73	10.6	120	17.4	99	14.3	109	15.8
Writing	288	41.7	87	12.6	105	15.2	107	15.5	103	14.9
Speaking	293	42.5	97	14.1	99	14.3	101	14.6	100	14.5
Listening	295	42.8	89	12.9	95	13.8	101	14.6	110	15.9
Total	690	100	690	100	690	100	690	100	690	100

Table 1 shows self-reported English language competence of the respondents. The table shows that 19% respondents could not read English language. Almost same percentage of the respondents (18.6%) could not write the language. The percentage of the respondents who could speak this language is 21.2%, whereas the percentage of the respondents who could not understand the language while listening is a little lower than the percentage of respondents who cannot speak the language (20.4%). Interestingly, the results revealed that 0.4% of the respondents could not write English language but could read it and 0.8% respondents could not understand the language while listening it. The table showed that 11.9% of the respondents have poor reading competence of the language. Writing competence is also poor among 12.6% of the respondents. Speaking of the language is poor among 14.3% respondents and almost similar percentage of the respondents have poor listening competence (13.3%). It showed that 0.7% respondents could write the language poorly but cannot read the language. However, 1%

respondents could speak the language poorly but could not understand it with the same competence.

Apart from poor English language competence, 14.3% respondents reported medium level reading ability. The percentage of medium level writing of the respondents is 16.1%. Almost similar percentage of the respondents (16.7%) reported that they have medium level speaking ability. Medium level listening competence of the respondents is 14.2%. It reveals that 1.8% respondents have medium level writing ability but could not have same level of reading competence. However, 2.5% respondents have medium level speaking competence but did not have the same level of listening competence. The table also showed that 31.9% respondents have good reading ability, and 32.3% respondents have good writing competence. Good speaking and listening competence also have almost similar percentage of the respondents (31.1% and 30%, respectively). It is also found that 22.9% respondents have excellent reading competence. The percentage of excellent writing is slightly lower than the percentage of excellent reading (20.4%). The percentage of excellent listening competence of the respondents is almost similar to the percentage of excellent reading (22%). However, excellent speaking has lowest percentage in the category (17.7%). The result dismantles that the respondents have excellent reading, writing and listening competence but cannot excellently speak the language.

The table also comprises English language competence of fathers. The table shows that 41.9% fathers are unable to read English language. The percentage of fathers who are unable to write the language is similar to the percentage of their reading competence (41.7%). The table also shows that the percentage of fathers who are unable to speak the language (42.5%) is similar to the percentage of fathers who are unable to understand the language while listening it (42.8%). Poor reading ability is 10.6% among fathers. The percentage of poor writing is 12.6% and percentage of poor speaking is 14.3% among them. Some of the fathers (12.9%) reported that they could not understand the language while listening it. The results reveal that 2% fathers could write the language poorly but could not read at the same level. The results also revealed that 1.2% fathers could speak the language poorly but could not understand it while listening at the same level of competence.

The percentage of medium level reading competence of fathers is 17.4%, writing competence is 15.2%, speaking competence is 14.3% and listening competence is 13.8%. Good reading, speaking and listening competence of fathers have almost similar percentages (14.3%, 14.6% and 14.6%, respectively), whereas good writing ability is slightly higher than the former competence (15.5%). Further, excellent reading and listening competence of fathers have similar percentages (15.8% and 15.9%, respectively), whereas excellent writing and speaking competence of fathers have almost similar percentage as well (14.9% and 14.5%, respectively).

Table 2: Frequency and percentage distribution of common and bourgeois parlance

Linguistic Competence	<i>f</i>	%
<b>Respondent</b>		
<i>No English Competence</i>	122	17.7
<i>Common Parlance</i>	172	24.9
<i>Bourgeois Parlance</i>	396	57.4
<b>Father</b>		
<i>No English Competence</i>	277	40.1
<i>Common Parlance</i>	193	28.0
<i>Bourgeois Parlance</i>	220	31.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2 comprises frequency distribution of linguistic competence of respondents and their father. The table exhibits that almost 18% of the fathers do not have English language competence which means that they do not understand the language. It is notable that almost 25% of the fathers used to speak common parlance of English language. It means that they have below average linguistic ability of the language. On the contrary, a slightly higher than the half of the fathers (57.4%) have bourgeois parlance. In other words, they have above average linguistic ability of English language. Further, only 28% of the respondents used to speak common parlance, whereas 32% of the respondents have bourgeois parlance. Interestingly, majority of the respondents (40.1%) do understand English language.

Figure 1 presents the results of multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) comprising occupation, education, English language competence of respondents and their fathers as well as their family income. Language speaks at home is also included in the analysis. The eigenvalue of dimension 1 is 4.2 (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.870$ , Inertia = 0.524). The eigenvalue of dimension 2 is 2.7 ( $\alpha = 0.0.72$ , Inertia = 0.34). The Inertia value showed that these two dimensions accounted for by 86% of the variance in the data (Mean = 0.604).

The space of linguistic competence showed that respondents and fathers with higher family income, education and occupation have bourgeois parlance, whereas respondents and fathers with lower occupation, education and family income have common parlance. The upper portion of the figure showed that workers, small farmers, shopkeepers, salesmen, supervisors, small businessmen, and schoolteachers used to speak local dialects in home. They also have lower education and lower family income. The figure showed that salesman and supervisor fathers used to speak Punjabi at home, whereas, Sraiki language is associated with middle and matric education level. Overall, the upper portion of the figure showed that respondents and fathers with lower family income, education and occupation have common parlance. The important finding from the analysis is that the children reproduced the language competence of their father. In other words, children from disadvantaged family background reproduced the disadvantaged status of the family in terms of language competence, education, occupation and income.

The lower portion of the figure comprised higher family income, education, occupation and linguistic competence. The figure showed that respondents from advantaged family background have higher level English Language competence as university

and college teachers used to speak English language. However, managers are associated with Urdu language. The figure also showed that respondents with advantaged family background have bourgeois parlance as well as their father. They also have higher income, education and occupation. Overall, this portion revealed that children from advantage family background reproduced the bourgeois parlance.

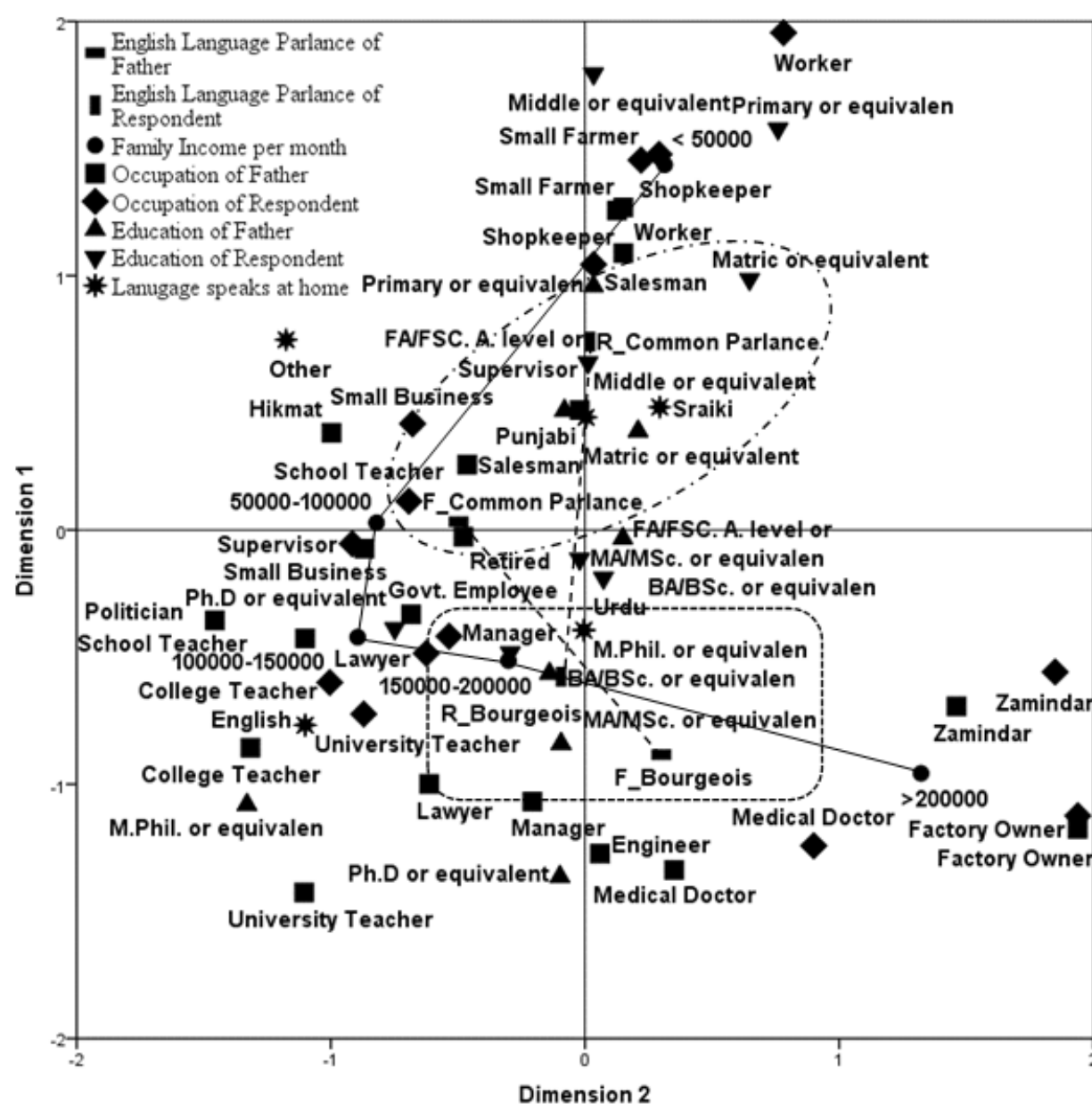


Figure 1. The social space of linguistic competence

#### 4. Discussion

Language competence has been viewed in socialization perspective, but it has structural implications which were revealed in the reproduction theory of Bourdieu that stated that a structure supports and facilitates unequal distribution of resources including linguistic resources. The study supported the argument of unequal distribution of linguistic competence across generations. In Pakistan, different schools are also responsible for such unequal distribution of language competence and transformation of such inequality across generations such as Urdu and English medium schools inculcate knowledge in Urdu and English language, respectively (Rahman, 2010; Tooley, et. al., 2009). Bourdieu (1984) argued that such inequality can be related with the unequal distribution of economic resources because lower and lower middle-class students are unable to acquire high English language competence. Mehboob (2007) discussed this matter in the context of Pakistan and argued that English medium schools are highly costly which lower-class individuals cannot afford. Therefore, the students studied from English medium schools are destined for higher level jobs. The study also supported this argument in Pakistani context.

English language is mode of official communication of prestigious institutes of Pakistan such as Bureaucracy, Military and Justice System (Abbas, 1993; Rahman, 2005) which revealed that acquisition of this language is highly important for upward mobility as well as for the reproduction of the upper class. The results also indicated that such reproduction took place and sustained across one generation in Punjab as the higher-level social positions are associated with bourgeois parlance. Generally, the occupational distribution and its relationship with division of parlance also supported reproduction theory.

Overall, the study supported linguistic reproduction theory as well as the economic and social reproduction of Bourdieu (1984) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) as all the major postulates of the theory, especially unequal distribution of language, are supported empirically. The study suggests examining such distribution and reproduction across gender.

#### 5. Conclusion

The study aimed to explore the reproduction of linguistic competence in southern Punjab. The study found that respondents with lower family income, education and occupation used to speak local dialects at home and have common parlance. On the contrary, respondents with higher family income, education and occupation used to speak English and Urdu in their homes and they have bourgeois parlance. The study concluded that the respondents reproduced the parlance of their father. Thus, the linguistic competence was reproduced in the region, and it is unequally distributed across social positions, education and income.

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