SILENCING CHILDREN'S POWER OF SELF-EXPRESSION

An examination of coercive relations of power in English-medium schools in Pakistan

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Abstract

This paper analyses how English-medium policy in schools silences children's power of self-expression in Pakistan, and how linguistic deficiencies and disadvantages in school language minimize their potential for meaningful cognitive/academic engagement. The study focuses on the degree of inclusion children enjoy linguistically, culturally, emotionally and cognitively. Conducted within 11 low-fee English-medium schools, it uses multiple data sources such as a questionnaire survey, interviews and non-participant observations. Theoretically, it draws on Jim Cummins' (2000) concepts of 'coercive relations of power/collaborative relations of power' to illustrate how educators as powerful individuals exercise coercive powers to glorify English-only policy, legitimize and normalize erroneous assumptions about students' linguistic/cultural resources. We also find that theoretically inspired by foreign concepts of TESOL/EFL/ESL, educators explicitly devalue and abandon children's native languages as pedagogical resources in English teaching. Pedagogically, being deficient in the English language, English-only policy excludes children from maximum cognitive/academic engagement as they are coerced to rely on copying, and rote memorization during reading, writing and examination. Towards the end, the study calls for a paradigm shift and proposes educators to create collaborative relations of power that affirms children's identities, and invests on their languages/cultures as valuable pedagogical resources. This could make education more participatory, liberatory and empowering.

Keywords: Coercive versus collaborative relations of power, inclusive education, English-medium policy, language policy and planning, Pakistan

1. INTRODUCTION

(1) hundreds of millions of children around the world are forced to study in a language they barely understand; and (2) children become most easily literate in their mother tongue, their language

of daily use, and the skills they gain in this process can be applied subsequently to gain literacy in national and international languages. Bringing their languages and cultures into the classroom is thus an important way to make education more inclusive and equitable. (Benson & Kosonen, 2013, p. ix)

The above observations aptly foreground the theoretical and conceptual premise of the present study on inclusive education with reference language use. This paper seeks to conceptualize inclusive education in relation to linguistic deficiencies and linguistic disadvantages which children confront due to mismatches between the languages they and their parents speak, and the "languages that are privileged by the schools and other institutions of power" (Benson & Kosonen, 2013, p. 1)—in this case English, which schools employ as a medium of curriculum, instruction and examination. The context and focus of the paper is on English-only policy in the low-fee private schools in Quetta, the provincial capital of the province of Balochistan in Pakistan. Having surveyed English-medium schools, gathered educators' insights on the role of children's native languages, explored pedagogical practices therein, and gathered insights on students' socio-educational backgrounds and sociocultural ecologies, we problematize English-only medium of instruction policy as we present multiple evidences to show that being an alien language to most children's sociolinguistic and sociocultural ecologies, the use of English as a medium stands as a major barrier to inclusive, participatory, equitable, and liberatory education.

Our operationalized definition of inclusive education is that regardless of their ethnolinguistic and socio-economic backgrounds, schools and educators should empower all children to participate meaningfully and optimally in the overall educational processes, and that the medium of education should help transform and liberate students rather than stifle their cognitive and educational potential. In addition, such meaningful education should create children's core capabilities that are essential for their human development such as motional engagement, senses, imagination and thought, practical reasoning and so on as envisioned by Nussbaum (2011) in her human development approach. We raise this issue because we observe that the mismatches between children's home languages and the school languages rob millions of children of their natural advantage of studying in their native languages at their most formative age of education, not only in Pakistan, but also worldwide. Thus, from the viewpoint of inclusive education, the questions surrounding children's languages and cultures are both critically urgent as well as persuasively pertinent for research within Pakistan.

For the analysis of data, the study mainly draws on Cummins' (2000, 2009a, 2009b) concept of 'Coercive relations of power and Collaborative relations of power' to examine how much educators within the schools include and empower students by affirming their identities, investing on their prior knowledge, and engaging them cognitively/academically in the teaching and learning processes. At broader level, the study also draws on the theory of additive bi/multilingual education and extensive empirical evidence from across wide range of contexts to show that inclusive education could happen best when schools and teachers accommodate, accept,

acknowledge and include the linguistic and cultural resources which children bring to the schools (Alidou et al., 2006; Baker, 2011; Benson, 2002; Benson & Kosonen, 2013; Cummins, 2000, 2001, 2009a; Manan, David & Dumanig, 2015; Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson, Panda & Mohanty, 2009). The objectives of the study are as under:

- to examine the amount of space educators within the schools provide for the prior knowledge and cultural/linguistic resources of the learners to affirm their identities and empower them to engage cognitively in the teaching/learning process
- to analyze how inclusive, the teaching and learning practices currently stand in the English-medium schools in the given city/locality

2.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In his proposed framework, Cummins (2000, 2009a, 2009b) distinguishes between coercive and collaborative relations of power to explain how power could manifest variously in micro-level interactions between educators and students. This framework combines psycholinguistic and sociological constructs. According to Cummins (2009b), "Coercive relations of power refer to the exercise of power by a dominant individual, group, or country to the detriment of a subordinated individual, group or country" (p. 263). Such powers as Cummins posits, operate in society at large as well as in classrooms, which legitimize and normalize erroneous assumptions about the languages and cultures students from the non-dominant languages bring to classrooms from their homes (Figure 1, below).

The educators may also marginalize the linguistic and cultural resources of the speakers of the non-dominant languages in articulated and implicit ways through their 'benign neglect' (Cummins, 2009b, p. 263). Such suppressive strategy is a less obvious though; however, Cummins (2009b) views it as "perhaps equally effective conduit for coercive relations of power" (p. 263). In addition, Cummins (2009b) explains that such power which is rooted in the wider society (macro-interactions), happens to influence and shape educators' beliefs to "define their roles and the types of structures that are established in the educational system" (p. 263).

As an alternative paradigm to the coercive relations of power, Cummins (2009) proposes that the powers should contrastingly be premised on collaborative relations of power. In this, learners may be 'enabled' or 'empowered' to achieve more in their studies. As such, power in Cummins' view is not fixed, but can be generated through educators' collaborative interaction to enable and empower learners and communities to generate and share more, particularly utilizing optimally the cultural and linguistic resources which learners bring to the classrooms from their homes and communities. In this case, schooling aims to amplify rather than to silence learners' "power of self-expression" (Cummins, 2009b, p. 263). Thus, educators at the micro-level could create interpersonal spaces so that knowledge is generated additively, and learners' identities are negotiated equitably. This would naturally give rise to an

inclusive educational environment within the schools where learners would get opportunities for maximum cognitive engagement, and identity investment/affirmation. Figure 2 (next page) provides a graphical presentation of the same framework.

Figure 1: Coercive and collaborative relations of power manifested in macro- and micro-interactions

**COERCIVE AND COLLABORATIVE RELATIONS
OF POWER MANIFESTED IN MACRO-INTERACTIONS BETWEEN
SUBORDINATED COMMUNITIES AND DOMINANT GROUP INSTITUTIONS**

EDUCATOR ROLE DEFINITIONS ↔ **EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURES**

**MICRO-INTERACTIONS BETWEEN
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS**

forming an

INTERPERSONAL SPACE

within which
knowledge is generated
and
identities are negotiated

**EITHER
REINFORCING COERCIVE RELATIONS OF POWER
OR
PROMOTING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONS OF POWER**

Figure 2: A Framework for Academic Language Learning—Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society
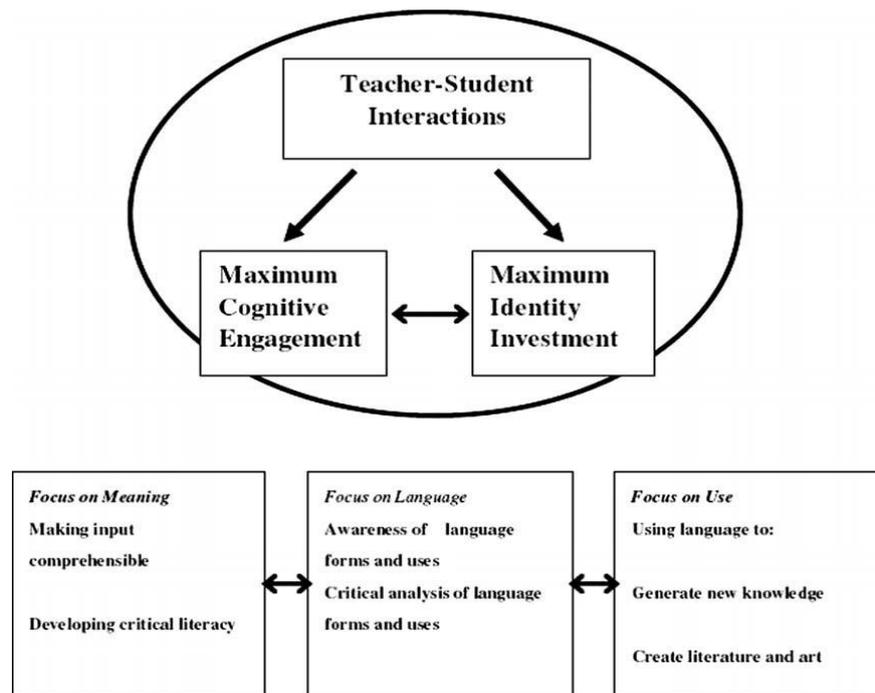
3. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Pakistan is a highly multilingual, multiethnic and multicultural country. The total number of languages used in the country are 77 (Ethnologue, 2016). Urdu serves as the national language while English functions as the official language. At the same time, English is the most powerful language in institutional terms as it is used in the domains of power such as government, law, corporate sector, higher education, etc. (Rahman, 1996). In view of the institutional powers English wields within the country, and the global powers it holds in the outside world, most people view it as a 'passport to privileges' (Rahman, 2005), and a vehicle for social and economic mobility (Manan & David, 2013; Manan, David & Dumanig, 2014; Mansoor, 2004).

Thus considering the imagined powers of the English language both within and outside the country, the demand for teaching of the English language remarkably increased over the last two decades. The increasing public demand also encouraged private entrepreneurs of different types to invest massively on the business of private schools. Critically, the governments' liberalized policy and loose regulatory mechanism also boosted the industry of private education which resulted in exponential increase in the private schools of about ten-fold (Andrabi, Das & Khwaja,

2008). In these circumstances, one finds that although the demand for English language is pragmatic and rational; however, it is also crucial to examine how effective and successful English medium policy remains given the sociolinguistic context of Pakistan, the theoretical complexities, and the quality of teachers, and other academic facilities the low-fee schools provide.

4.   METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH SITE

This study took place in 11 low-fee English-medium private schools in Quetta, the capital city of the Balochistan province. The rationale behind selecting Quetta city was due to researchers' easy and convenient access to the research sites or the schools under survey. In addition, since the researcher belongs to the same city, and has a wider network of colleagues working in the education sector in general and in some low-fee schools in particular; therefore, Quetta was deemed appropriate for research. The low-fee schools which are widely spread around the city have been selected because of their exponential increase, and their popularity amongst public as the English medium schools. Heyneman and Stern (2013) defined low-fee school "as one whose tuition fee was lower than half the minimum wage". Quetta district is highly multilingual and multicutral area that hosts a large number of tribes, ethnic and linguistic groups.

The study reports part of a doctoral research which constitutes a selected part of a questionnaire survey, and part of the qualitative study, drawing on classroom observations and interviews. This study has been conducted in parts. Earlier part took place in 2014 whereas the other part took place in 2017. The population for questionnaire survey was students from Grade 9th and 10th from the same schools. Sampling was based on probability sampling technique. Within the probability sampling, a systematic sampling procedure was applied, where every 5th member from among the target population was selected. Based on this sampling technique, a total of 245 respondents responded to questionnaire from higher secondary classes, which are locally termed as grade 9th and 10th.

The questionnaire contents included respondents' biographical information and their preparation strategy for examination. Items regarding examination strategy sought information whether they were doing rote learning, or conceptual learning of the course contents. In addition, they were also asked to suggest whether their teachers encouraged creativity and self-expression or forced them to reproduce already prepared questions/answers. Likert scale such as *strongly agree, disagree, neutral, agree* and *strongly agree* was used. For analysis, the data is presented in the form of simple descriptive quantitative form that include tables and graphs showing the frequency counts and percentages. Another component in the questionnaire included a written essay. The rationale behind assessment of students' writing ability was to examine how much students develop in their English writing skills in the schools that claim English as a medium of instruction, and where examinations are held exclusively in the English language. Their writing was assessed using an analytic

scoring rubric proposed by Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel and Hughey (1981). In order to ensure the validity of the questionnaire items, a pilot study was conducted prior to the final round of questionnaire distribution. A total of 25 students participated in this round.

Qualitative data constitutes another crucial component of the study. A total of 8 teachers were available for interviews from different schools. Likewise, interviews were conducted with students (30), teachers (8) and school principals (11). The sampling was purposive as students were drawn from high secondary classes (grade 9th& 10th) while teachers and school principals were also purposively selected to gather as in-depth information as possible. The duration of each interview ranged from 13 to 21 minutes. The principal author of this article conducted interviews in three languages such as English, Urdu, and native languages, depending on respondents' level convenience and choice. Interviews were semi-structured; occasional probes were also added wherever it was deemed necessary. The following questions were precisely used as interview guide:

1) Pakistan is a multilingual country; however, most schools including yours use English-only medium of instruction policy. Would you explain why is it so?

2) Research suggests that children's early education can develop better if they are educated in the language, which they learn at home—mother tongue/native language. However, many educationists in Pakistan are yet to pay heed to such research. Could you justify the use of English-medium policy in schools?

3) How do you view the scope and potential of a mother-tongue based multilingual education policy in Pakistan?

4) Suggest your desired medium of instruction policy in schools.

In addition to the above set of structured questions, the researcher also added occasional questions in the form of probes to seek further information, clarification and confirmation on the issues raised. Those questions were about:

a) Undoubtedly, English is the most important language in terms of socioeconomic benefits, but how realistic is it to use it as a medium from day one when most students in such schools are yet to know the very basics of the language?

b) Can students conceptualize or internalize their course contents with their undeveloped levels of competence especially the academic competence such as in reading and writing?

c) General impression is that most students in such schools tend to memorize rather than conceptualize subject material. Do you agree? In this context, do you think students are ready to cope with English especially during their written examinations?

d) How easy or challenging is it for you to cope with English as a medium of instruction? Please elaborate.

e) How do you prepare for examination? Do you try to understand the concepts or just memorize the subject material?

Table 1: Number of participants

Interviews	
Category	**Number**
Students	30
Teachers	08
School principals	11
Questionnaire survey	
Students	245

Interview transcription and classroom observations were used to help in thematic analysis. For this, a six-phased thematic framework was used which included familiarizing with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, based on initial coding scheme and a careful review of the emerging pattern of the themes, the recurrent and interrelated themes collectively oriented towards the glorification of English-medium policy and the outright rejection of a mother-tongue based multilingual policy. This theme was subsequently labeled through the prism of the theoretical framework employed in this study— '*Minimum identity affirmation: educators' devaluation of students' cultural and linguistic resources*'. While reporting data, respondents' direct quotations have been labelled as student (STDT), teacher (TCHR), and principal (PRPL). Research ethics concerning informing respondents about the objectives of the study, seeking their consent for participation in the study, maintaining their anonymity and keeping confidentiality of their identities were carefully observed.

Similarly, classroom observation was of non-participant nature which covered 10 classes in 09 different schools, totaling 400 minutes. Observation was used to gather insight into the following dimensions/issues:

- Students' level of active, meaningful cognitive engagement in reading and writing exercises
- Their level of participation
- The use of language (s) in classroom

- The role of English as a medium of textbooks and examination in including or excluding in meaningful, inclusive education

4.1 Respondents' biographical information

In terms of gender, only 26 (11%) students were females while n=219 (89%) were males. In addition, 06 teachers were females while 2 were males. Similarly, 02 school principals were females and 09 were males. In terms of academic qualification, 2 teachers held MA/MSc degrees, 5 Bachelor and 1 Intermediate degree. School principals' majority held MA/MSC degrees and only 2 had Bachelor degrees. Language background of respondents shows that Pashto speakers form the majority. Other students belong to 10 different ethnic groups. Teachers and school principals also belong to diverse backgrounds. Table 2 illustrates respondents' linguistic background.

Table 2: Linguistic background of respondents

Students		Teachers		School principals	
Language	Number (%)	Language	Number (%)	Language	Number (%)
Pashto	168 (68.54)	Pashto	3 (37.5)	Pashto	5 (45.46)
Kohistani	2 (0.82)	Urdu	1 (12.5)	Urdu	2 (18.18)
Hindko	5 (2.04)	Persian	1 (12.5)	Balochi	1 (9.09)
Persian	7 (2.86)	Balochi	1 (12.5)	Punjabi	3 (27.27)
Urdu	15 (6.14)	Punjabi	2 (25)	--	--
Siraiki	8 (3.28)	--	--	--	--
Punjabi	11 (4.48)	--	--	--	--
Kashmiri	5 (2.04)	--	--	--	--
Balochi	11 (4.48)	--	--	--	--
Sindhi	5 (2.04)	--	--	--	--
Burahvi	8 (3.28)	--	--	--	--
Total	**245 (100)**		**08 (100)**		**11 (100)**

Students largely belong to uneducated families. We find that 33.46% of their fathers and 71.84 of their mothers do not hold any formal education at all. Similarly, 38% of the fathers and 5% of the mothers hold Master's Degree while only 7.6% of the fathers and 4.9% of the mothers hold Bachelor's Degree. Occupational background of parents shows that vast majority of their mothers are housewives whereas a significant number of students 40% suggests that their fathers hold private businesses.

5.   DATA ANALYSIS—A SNAPSHOT OF MICRO-LEVEL COERCIVE RELATIONS OF POWER BETWEEN EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

In this section, we present multiple data sets to demonstrate how inclusive or exclusive teaching and learning practices, and perceptions stand. We first present data from interviews to illustrate how different stakeholders view the use of different languages in the classrooms. Subsequently follows data from the classroom practices specifically exhibiting how reading, writing, and examining/testing practices are run in those schools. We find that schools as powerful social structures force educators to emphasize and press upon exclusive use of the socially powerful languages such as English (official) and Urdu (national) languages of the country. In doing so, they relegate the native languages of most children, and even prohibit their use within the school premises. Evidence suggests that the coercive nature of schools and educators' policies, perceptions and practices within the classrooms restrain, and limit most children's power of expressions. Children's power of expressions here denotes the cultures and languages of their homes rather than the dominant languages which most schools impose. Data illustrates how the use of an alien language as medium of textbooks, instruction and examination excludes children from participating actively and meaningfully in the teaching and learning processes. Based on data analysis, we have assigned headings and sub-headings. These headings primarily signify coercion and minimization at different levels, and in different forms: conceptual, pedagogical, and social/cultural. Here we report and discuss each one of the above themes in some detail:

5.1 Minimum identity affirmation: educators' devaluation of students' cultural and linguistic resources

Cummins (2009a) observes that one of the most challenging experiences for students of less dominant languages at the early schooling stages being exclusively educated in the dominant languages is their inability to express their intelligence, feelings, ideas and humor to teachers and peers. Such conditions could lead teachers to underestimate their students' learning capabilities, and misunderstand their genuine aspirations for achieving their goals in schools and beyond. In contrast, when students realize that schools and teachers appreciate their intelligence and imagination, and that their multilingual talents receive affirmation in the classrooms, they tend to invest their identities much more actively and productively in the learning processes (Cummins, Brown & Sayers, 2007). Such active engagement, meaningful participation and inclusion signify affirmation of students' identities where they find favorable environment for their self-expression. Cummins (2009b) argues that such affirmation in the context of teacher-student interactions within the school value not only their identities, but it also openly "challenges the devaluation of student and community identity in the wider society" (p. 23). In addition, the affirmation of students' identities simultaneously resists the operation of coercive relations of power

in the society at large, and results in students' empowerment, literacy engagement, thus paving ways for collaborative creation of power.

Results of interviews with teachers and school principals also clearly suggest that most children's native languages have been devalued vis-à-vis Urdu and English languages, and except for two school principals, none of them conceive the role and use of the native languages positively. Cummins (2009b) describes such conceptions as 'normalized assumptions'. For instance, Cummins (2009b) contends that one of the normalized assumptions among most educators is that, "The cultural knowledge and first language (L1) linguistic abilities that bilingual students bring to school have little instructional relevance" (p. 262). Similarly, Cummins (2000, 2009a, 2009b) also emphasizes that to ensure maximum identity investment of the students, schools should activate their prior knowledge and build on it rather than to underestimate it. However, contrary to Cummins' thesis, there prevail normalized assumptions among educators. Here follows a summary of educators' arguments for devaluing children's native languages, and for their exclusive support for English-only policy. The educators believe that,

- Native languages have no career prospects, and promise no economic returns.
- Native languages are best suited to homes and intra-community domains, but not schools.
- Children already know their native languages; therefore, there is no need to teach them in schools.
- When children are young, they can best learn the English language; therefore, the earlier, the English, the better.
- English is an international language; we should not waste time in teaching native languages in schools.
- Teaching native languages means we will add one more language to children's syllabus; this will increase their workload.
- A multilingual policy with addition of native languages will increase the number of languages, which means that teaching more languages will add to their confusion.
- English should be taught from day one in schools so that children find sufficient time to master this language.

Following is a brief account of teachers and school principals' arguments. According to a teacher, children's native languages are not required in schools because there is a need to maximize children's exposure to only the English language. She believed that the greater the use of English, the greater the proficiency levels. She contends that, "*After all, local languages can give students nothing. They will be more backward than now*" (TCHR8). Many believe that studying English as a medium from the beginning has greater chances to secure lucrative jobs. In their views, better English proficiency can be achieved only when English is taught as a medium of instruction. According to a teacher, "*If children study local languages in schools, they will miss on*

all opportunities English can normally bring". Another teacher emphasizes the scope of English-only saying that, "*Of course, the real productive schooling is schooling in the English medium*" (TCHR2). A teacher equates English-only education with quality and marketability: "*Only English medium has some promise as well as quality. Children become familiar with a language that has multiple scope. Scope is the most important aspect*" (TCHR1). Others view the presence of many languages as a serious educational dilemma, and they conceive the existing linguistic and cultural diversity within the schools as a potential problem. A teacher showed concerns that "*Those many languages cannot be taught in schools. Whose mother tongue will you teach when there are so many students speaking different languages*"? He further proposed that, "*It may be good to use local languages at home, village or may be in the province*" (TCHR4).

In addition to teachers, school principals also see the institutional power, multiple scope, and scientific sophistication of the English language as the basis for their argument in favor of English-only policy, and the rejection of students' native languages. While describing the usefulness of English-only policy, a school principal argued that, "*I support only English. All professions use English. Other languages may be good, but they are not like English in scope*" (PRPL2). Another school principal calls for a pragmatic rather than emotional approach towards language issue in schools, and the pragmatic approach is the teaching of English-only in schools. She observes that,

> Practically local languages have no scope outside home and community. I know they are our own languages, but we cannot sacrifice the future of children by making sentimental decisions in favor of mother tongue. (PRPL7)

One of the principals apprehended that linguistic diversity was a problem, and raised concerns that encouraging the native languages might cause split and result in disintegration of the country. He emphasized that, "*When children already use mother tongues at home, I do not think they should also be taught in the school*" (PRPL5). In the same vein, others also conceived a multilingual education policy problematic. He remarked that,

> We cannot teach many languages. Children's minds cannot absorb burden of many languages. Only English is ok. More languages mean more challenges. (PRPL1)

Contrary to the subtractive views of most teachers and school principals, and their abandonment of the use of native languages in education, two out of 11 school principals did realize and acknowledge their importance, and recognized their value for an inclusive education. They showed positive attitudes towards the value of native languages and endorsed the manifold advantages associated with their teaching. For instance, a principal explained that,

> I favor teaching in mother tongue at least until primary level. It is so because it is the easiest medium to communicate through, and to clarify concepts of the child. (PRPL4)

Teaching in native languages would also develop their creativity, and motivate them to study the classical poetry, other literary genres, history, and culture. The two principals also admitted that the English-dominant curriculum caused speakers of the native languages to become ignorant about their historical and cultural roots. It also resulted in cultural alienation. One of the above principals said that, "…*learning is much easier in mother tongue than in a foreign language like English. Students will not have to do rote learning*" (PRPL10).

On the other hand, it was ironic to find most students holding 'normalized assumptions' (Cummins, 2009b). They put forward typical propositions, which assess the value of languages merely on the basis of the pragmatic, material or economic value, which they hold. They tend to glorify English and Urdu languages for their social and economic value. Simultaneously, they undervalue the role of the native languages because they believe that those languages have no value and function in the domains outside communities and homes. For instance, a student argued that, "*I like Urdu and English to learn. I do not want mother-tongue in school because it is not used in foreign*" (STDT3). Another student abandons the use of mother-tongues in schools because in his view, "*We will be backward if we don't learn English*". The same student further contends that, "*I want only English in schools because it is a necessity. I will never support local languages. Local languages are spoken only in local places*" (STDT5). In their views, native languages were more suited for homes and intra-community use; therefore, they should remain restricted within those informal domains. The respondents tend to assign informal domains to the local languages, and propose a position, which in Rahman's (2005) view, relegates those languages into social ghettos. Their views also render literacy as valueless in their mother-tongues. As a respondent argues, "*I like mother-tongue, but we should speak English because we are in English-medium school. I don't know how to write and read in mother-tongue, but I think it is not important*" (STDT4). Another student also undermines the value of reading and writing in his mother-tongue, as they have no instrumental function to perform in career-building— "*Other languages may have importance but as compared to English, they are not. Reading or writing in my mother-tongue does not give me job*" (STDT2). Despite the challenges they face in reading, writing, speaking or understanding English, yet they hesitate to recommend the native languages. They admit that although English poses considerable challenges and difficulties as a medium of instruction; however, they presume that continuous contact and encounter with the English textbooks may somehow enhance their proficiency in the English language. A student remarked that, "*I know English is more difficult, but there is no other choice. We should try and work hard to learn English*" (STDT1). Another student referred to the reasons why they tend to memorize instead of conceptualizing subject material. He said that, "*Most of us memorize questions and answers for exam. We memorize because we don't know meanings of many words in the textbooks*" (STDT3).

As a whole, majority of the above pool of respondents that represents teachers, school principals, and students perceive English-medium policy positively while

rendering the native languages less value. It may be argued that they consider that learning English is synonymous with knowledge while they presumably indicate that knowledge acquired in languages others than English is worthless. Cummins also refers to the same assumption:

> Literacy' refers only to reading and writing in the dominant language (henceforth English); literacy abilities in languages other than English and in modalities other than the written modality are ignored. (Cummins, 2009b)

In view of the negative perceptions most stakeholders hold, one may offer a brief rebuttal as how they see the role, value and function of the native languages as such beliefs may sound logical and rational; however, their theoretical tenability invites much debate. The arguments are unfounded when seen from research perspective as they show disregard to numerous theoretical propositions Cummins and a large number of scholars working on bi/multilingual development of children propose. For instance, Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis theorizes and proves that "Significant positive relationships exist between the development of academic skills in first (L1) and second (L2) languages" (Cummins, 2009a, p. 20). This is based on a premise that there exists a common underlying proficiency across languages. This principle has been stated as follows:

> To the extent that instruction in Lx is effective in promoting proficiency in Lx, transfer of this proficiency to Ly will occur provided there is adequate exposure to Ly (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation to learn Ly. (Cummins, 1980, p. 180)

Cummins (2009a) emphasizes that cross-lingual transfer can occur even between dissimilar languages such as Spanish and Basque; English and Chinese; Dutch and Turkish. Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, and Christian (2006) term this as a cross-linguistic reservoir of abilities that allows transfer of academic and conceptual knowledge across languages. Studies even confirm that the linguistic interdependence and transfer could go well beyond linguistic dimensions. In an extended review of research evidence, August and Shanahan (2006) found that in a given sociolinguistic setting, five types of transfer could possibly occur:

1) Transfer of conceptual elements (e.g. understanding the concept of photosynthesis).
2) Transfer of metacognitive and metalinguistic strategies (e.g. strategies of visualizing, use of visuals or graphic organizers, mnemonic devices, vocabulary acquisition strategies, etc.).
3) Transfer of pragmatic aspects of language use (willingness to take risks in communication through L2, ability to use paralinguistic features such as gestures to aid communication, etc.).
4) Transfer of specific linguistic elements (knowledge of the meaning of photo in photosynthesis).
5) Transfer of phonological awareness—the knowledge that words are composed of distinct sounds.

Applying the linguistic interdependence hypothesis and the resultant types of transfer to the context of the present study, one would propose that children in Pakistan could potentially develop proficiency in English, a foreign language, much faster and easier if they are allowed optimal opportunities to acquire solid academic proficiency in their native language at the earlier years of schooling. Thus, a natural transition at the post-primary levels of schooling to English-medium policy could also lead to much easier and smooth transfer of not only various skills, but also ease relatively steady development in the English language.

Finally, given the common underlying proficiency principle, and the interdependent nature of cross-linguistic transfer, strategies and knowledge, it may be emphasized that "spending instructional time through a minority language entails no adverse consequences for the development of the majority language" (Cummins, 2009a, p. 21). Rather, extensive research evidence on bilingual education indicates "an inverse relationship between the amount of instruction in the majority language and minority student achievement in that language (Cummins, 2009a, p. 21). Finally, this may also testify to the theoretical limitations and ignorance of most educators' assumptions about the glorification of English-only policy, and the negative beliefs about the value of children's' native language.

5.2 Minimum cognitive/academic engagement: English as a barrier to inclusive education

As discussed in the previous section, Cummins (2000, 2009a, 2009b) theorizes that maximum affirmation and investment of students' identities in schools can result in maximum cognitive engagement and optimal academic literacy. For this to happen, students' prior knowledge needs to be invested on extensively in the teaching and learning processes. In line with the previous section, and with the theoretical orientation of Cummins, this section aims to report a snapshot of a range of pedagogical practices and instructional methods to show how minimally students' identities get affirmed. Additionally, teaching and learning practices shall also illustrate that how the monolingual approaches and that of employing an alien language such as English excludes students from maximum cognitive engagement and meaningful literacy development.

The following aspects of instruction are seen as characterizing students' disengagement and exclusion: blank reading of the textbooks, imitative writing practices, rote-based examination system, and several discourses handed down by teachers and authorities prohibiting the use of the local languages, and relegating their value within the premises of the schools. Here, we report and analyze each one of the above in detail.

5.2.1   Passive reading practices

One of the major areas of concern with regard to students' cognitive disengagement was the way reading practices occurred in the classrooms. Schools in the present case prescribe all textbooks in the English language except Urdu subject and Islamic studies. In light of the non-participant observation of the classrooms, we have come to the following conclusions: reading exercises are teacher-centered. Teacher begins reading of the textbook and students are asked to follow him/her. In following their teachers, students usually loudly read part of the text after their teachers. Towards the end, few teachers give Urdu translation of the whole text in descriptive form, while majority of the teachers provide literal translation of some of the major lexical items, which they believe are the difficult words. It is done by drawing two columns on the black/white board writing English words in the first while giving its Urdu translation in the second column. Students obediently copy those words in their notebooks, which they will subsequently memorize for their terminal examinations. During the whole exercise, students never asked any question nor did they dare to discuss anything with teachers. It was altogether a passive exercise, where communication occurred one-way while the body language and facial expressions of the students reflected blankness and incomprehension of the contents which they read. It was a decontextualized exercise where teachers failed to engage students in different explicit and implicit nuances of the text, nor did they contextualize the content to internalize the meanings and create any form of metalinguistic awareness about the English language. Students blindly followed their teachers in the form of chorus repetition. The translation was exclusively given in the Urdu language, a language, which is second language to most children. None of the teachers made an effort to translate text in children's native languages nor did they encourage students to use their native languages with their peers to exchange their knowledge about the meanings of the words. Importantly, English which the schools advertise as the medium of instruction, never featured in direct or communicative forms except for some safe-talk and formulaic sentences such as "*Come in*", "*Teacher, can I go to toilet*", "*Yes*", "*No*", "*Please*", etc.

To compound children's problems, we found that in some schools, authorities and teachers even issued notices and instructions prohibiting students not to use the native languages. For instance, authorities in one of the schools painted the following instructions in the lobby: "*Don't speak local languages*", an image of this may be seen in Figure 3 (below). Teachers and administrators even punish and penalize students occasionally for using native languages. For instance, Manan et al. (2014) cited the views of a school principal who remarked that in her school, "Local languages are not allowed here. If they use any of the local languages, we fine them 10 PKR. We do so because we think it is beneficial for them" (p. 10).

Given the treatment meted out to children's native languages perceptually and practically, it may be argued that this approach not only denies children the fundamental and necessary tools for learning, but it also rejects their very cultural and

identity-related markers. Continuity and acceptance of children's cultural markers is essential for 'supporting the whole child', and optimizing their well-being, and a sense of belonging at schools (Scherer, 2009). Other scholars such as Cummins (2001) and Agnihotri (2007) oppose such abstractive language practices, and argue that to "To reject a child's language in the school is to reject the child" (Cummins, 2001, p. 19).

Figure 3: Exclusion of children's native languages

Based on the level of students' passivity, blankness, and absence of active cognitive and emotional involvement in the reading processes, we may regard the pedagogical exercise as static and unresponsive to the actual metalinguistic and metacognitive needs of the students as learners of English as a foreign language. One of the major impediments, as one observed, was the alien nature of the English language to both teachers as well as students. The level of interaction between students and teachers was minimal in this case. They could not exchange their views with ease and freedom. Evidently, studies on the language factor in the Sub-Saharan Africa, Mozambique and other developing countries concluded that instruction in students' native languages fosters cognitive development and literacy and facilitates the transition between home and school (Alidou et al., 2006; Benson, 2000, 2002).

5.2.2   Imitative writing practices

Our observation suggests that mostly students spend major portion of their time in school and at home writing, but this writing is all about assigned homework by teachers. Usually, students are made to copy from textbooks. Such copying is a blind reproduction; which students are supposed to commit to memory for passing

examination. Most students usually spend about 3 to 4 hours daily on completing their assigned homework. During this exercise, they write answers from the textbooks. Later on, they will memorize the same for examinations. Evidence shows that the nature of writing was neither creative, nor meaningful nor spontaneous. Observation suggests that the kind of writing students are mainly engaged in, is apparently not the product of their understanding of the grammar, vocabulary, or linguistic feature that may be internalized through meaningful and natural knowledge of the language. It is generally imitative and rote learned that barely evolved through the acquisition of the language. None of the teachers engaged students in creative or reflective writing in which they could compose a thought-driven piece such as an essay, story, or personal experience, assigned spontaneously without prior memorization. For instance, a teacher admitted that he could not assign students any reflective writing task for the following reasons:
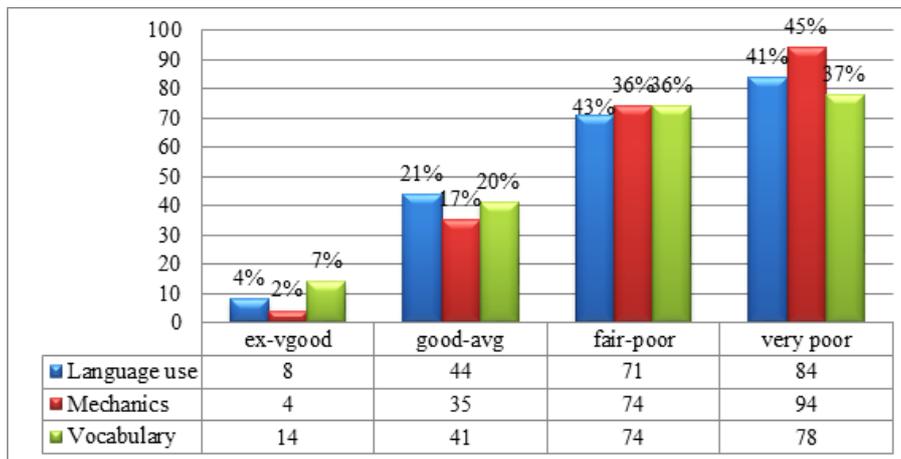
> A large number of our students are from uneducated family backgrounds. They have no background of English. Even if I assign them a paragraph or essay to write on their own, they will not be able to do it. Their level is too low. (TCHR3)

We thought it was also important to assess students' real writing to see where their level of writing stood after spending nearly 10 years in their schools, which claim to be English-medium. To assess the writing ability of the students, they were asked to attempt a small essay on a topic titled as "*What do you want to become in the future and why?*" Figure 4 (below) presents the assessment of their writing ability using analytic scoring procedure by Jacobs et al. (1981). It is a scoring rubric that rates "several aspects of writing or criteria rather than given a single score" (Weigle, 2002). In this model, scripts are rated on five qualitative variables such as contents, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. The assessment of quality indicators is done against four rating scales: *excellent to very good, good to average, fair to poor* and *very poor*.

Having analyzed three aspects of students' writing such as *language use*, *mechanics*, and *vocabulary use*, results indicate that considerably smaller number of students fall in the *excellent to very good* and *good to average* rating while the vast majority falls in *fair to poor* and *very poor.* A total of 31 students were found saying that they could not write in the English language; therefore, they wrote their essays in the Urdu language. More than 30 students were such whose writing did not make any sense. Grammatically and in terms of spelling, their writing was unreadable. Most of those who were categorized *very poor* and *fair-poor* had no sense of tense, verb-subject agreement, spelling, punctuation and so on. Based on classroom observations, the basic reason behind their lack of writing ability appeared to be the lack of practice, and the neglect of the teachers. Most importantly, since most students receive rather little exposure to the English language either in passive or actives forms; therefore, their knowledge about grammar, word order, vocabulary, and writing mechanics show serious signs of weaknesses. This aspect of teaching and learning makes one to suspect the effectiveness and preparedness of English-medium policy

particularly at the earlier stages of schooling. As students do not find their expressions in their writing, and their personal voices stand stifled in their overall writing due to the medium of an alien language; therefore, the whole exercise of blind copying and plagiarizing may be described as imitative rather than interpretive in essence. Students are simply coerced to write in a language in which they hardly have sufficient academic proficiency.

Figure 4: Writing ability of students

	ex-vgood	good-avg	fair-poor	very poor
Language use	8	44	71	84
Mechanics	4	35	74	94
Vocabulary	14	41	74	78

Two excerpts from their original essays are provided to illustrate the level of their writing.

Excerpt 1
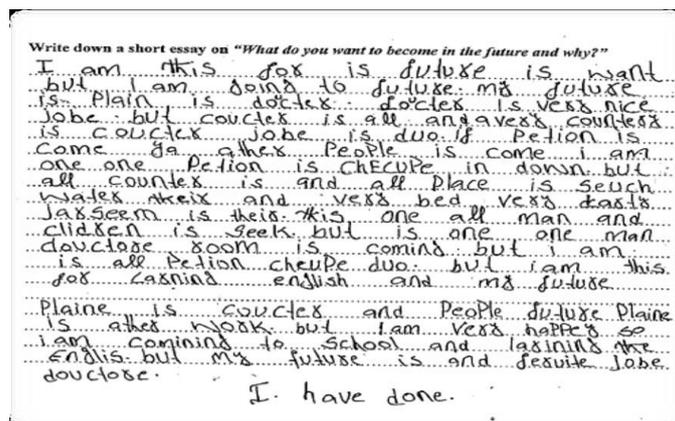
As excerpt 1 shows, a number of issues can be seen in his writing particularly it does not show grammatical accuracy. Word order also seems to be a challenge. As a whole, one cannot decipher the message. For instance, the given sentence does not follow the correct word order—*I am This for is future is want but I am going to future.* The essay also shows a number of other weaknesses such as wrong use of tense, inaccurate auxiliary and main verb, and incorrect use of capital letter. As he suggests, his father is a 'bizneizman', mother and father both have no education.

In excerpt 2, writing of the following students also shows similar weaknesses as in the case of excerpt 1.
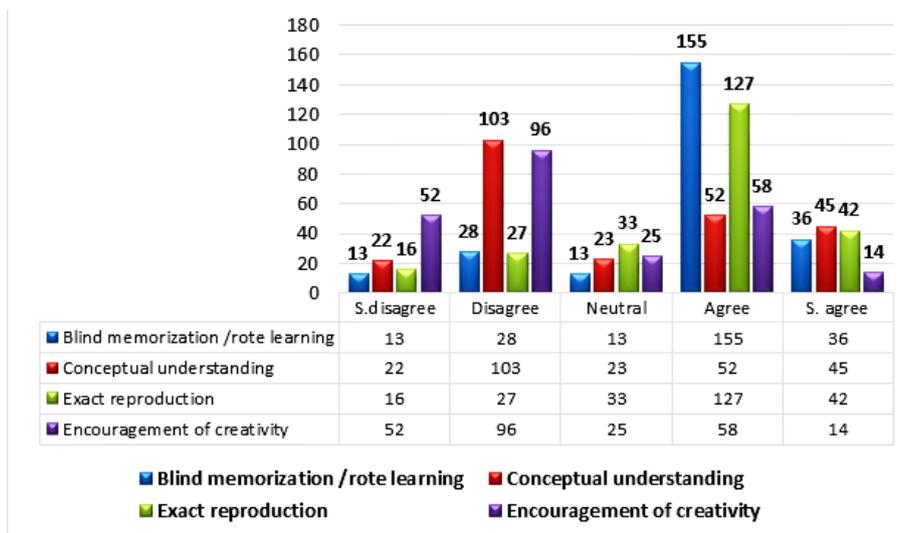
Excerpt 2
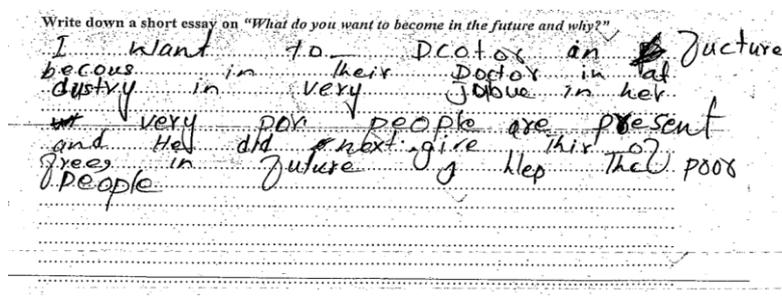
5.2.3   Rote based examination

We also addressed the testing and examination system and students' approach because we have observed that examination system generally forces children to rote learning, memorization, and actual reproduction of the material set out in advance. We believe this exercise not only curtails students' choices to free, independent and analytical thought and creativity, but it also commits them to rather torturous experiences of memorizing lengthy and tedious descriptive material such as in the case of general sciences, social studies, English and so on. Khattak (2014) describes how the system of education in Pakistan promotes memorization and reproduction, "The teachers generally act as authority in the classroom, dictate commands, and assign work and work-related activities" (p, 103). As we found, the low-fee English-medium private schools conduct examinations in the English language in all subjects except Islamic studies and Urdu as a subject, for which the medium is Urdu. Four points were raised in the survey questionnaire against which students had to choose their response:

1) I memorize the text when I prepare for examination.
2) I try to understand the concept and then write in my own words.
3) I reproduce the same material as given in the books/notebooks.

4) My teachers/examiners encourage creativity and self-reflection during ex-
   amination.

Figure 5 numerically presents students' answers in the form of frequency counts and
percentages. The figure shows that most of the students tend to memorize their an-
swers during examination. Memorization signifies cramming of the text without
knowing the meaning of the contents. The figure suggests that the examination sys-
tem only tests students' ability to reproduce than encourage conceptualization of
the subject matter. A large number of students also suggested that their examiners
usually encourage exact answers and their reproduction. Students told that they are
made to write exactly what has already been notified in the books or notebooks.

Figure 5: Students' rote-based strategy for exam preparation

	S.disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	S. agree
Blind memorization /rote learning	13	28	13	155	36
Conceptual understanding	22	103	23	52	45
Exact reproduction	16	27	33	127	42
Encouragement of creativity	52	96	25	58	14

We believe that the major barrier appears largely to be the foreign language and
partially the low-quality instruction. In a publication titled as "*The missing link , how
the language used in schools threatens the achievement of Education For All*", Pin-
nock's (2009) warning may aptly apply to most children in the present context,

> There is a danger that millions of children are learning to copy and recite set texts from
> blackboards and books, without developing the ability to decode or produce new writing
> for themselves" (p. 13).

In relation to such practices, Pinnock (2009, p. 13) problematizes the notion of liter-
acy and argues that, "If a child does not understand the meaning of a word because
it is in an unfamiliar language, learning to 'read and write' that word does not con-
stitute literacy: it is simply repetition". The same argument exactly applies to

hundreds and thousands of children who undergo the hectic experience of memo-rizing and reproducing large chunks of text in English without decoding or compre-hending the meanings.

In light of the emerging results from classroom practices, we observe that the policy as well as practices suffer from a rather fundamental flaw and a serious fallacy. These schools introduce English-medium policy right from day one, and fail to take into consideration the demands it would take for students to cope with English, a language they and their parents hardly have any exposure to. On the one hand, Eng-lish as a medium of textbooks poses serious challenges to most students because it stands entirely alien to their sociocultural ecology (Manan et al., 2015), and most children have hardly developed a basic level of oral fluency in the language, the flu-ency which Cummins terms as Basic interpersonal skills (BICS). On the other hand, at the enrollment stage, most children are barely prepared to cope with the highly de-manding academic English, termed as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Cummins' (2000, 2009a, 2009b) distinguishes between BICS and CALP to pro-pose that it is essential for students to have developed sufficient level of CALP to succeed in schools. For this, they need sufficient time, support and scaffolding. This usually takes from five to seven years to occur. CALP is also different from BICS as it is not just a basic level understanding of the surface level aspects such as vocabulary, pronunciation and casual social chit chat; but it includes highly cognitive skills such as classification, comparison, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and inferring. Further-more, CALP, which requires higher order skills, usually occurs in context reduced sit-uations where language is disembedded from a supportive context. Therefore, we may sum up that most students fail to engage cognitively and academically in the reading, writing and examination processes because they have not yet developed BICS, let alone CALP. Some other local factors also contribute to their miseries: un-qualified English teachers, poor pedagogies, reduced amount of meaningful input and scaffolding, and insensitive devaluation of their linguistic and cultural resources. Mohanty (2010) aptly describes such type of so-called English-medium schools as doom schools where children are doomed to failure due to their cosmetic Anglicizа-tion rather than a meaningful, sustained and genuine English-medium education.

6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

The study sums up that notwithstanding the self-proclaimed glorification of the Eng-lish language and that of the imagined benefits, which all the stakeholders suggest, real classroom practices barely provide students with inclusive learning environ-ment. The exclusion and devaluation of the cultural and linguistic resources of the children on the one hand, and that of the use of a socioculturally alien language such as English as a medium on the other hand, lead towards silencing most children's power of self-expression. Devaluation and denial to children's cultural and linguistic resources likens to minimum affirmation of their identities whereas the imposition of an alien language as a medium of instruction causes minimum cognitive/academic

engagement as such policy and practice force passive reading, imitative writing, and rote based examination. As an alternative paradigm, we propose a transformative pedagogy which is premised on collaborative relations of power (Cummins, 2009). According to this paradigm, children are 'enabled' and 'empowered' rather than forced to silence, amplifying their "power of self-expression" (Cummins, 2009b, p. 263). In doing so, educators could create interpersonal spaces within classrooms to generate knowledge in additive manner negotiating their identities equitably.

Such paradigmatic shift should orientate towards a multilingual education that creates possibilities for as many languages as possible in schools, and opens up "ideological and implementational space in the environment, in particular endangered languages, to evolve and flourish rather than dwindle and disappear" (Hornberger, 2003, p. 318). The core principle of the paradigmatic shift should ideally aim at sensitizing educators about the value of students' linguistic and cultural resources, and reorienting them to create as much space as possible for the collaborative relations of power as envisioned by Cummins. In addition, it is crucial to curtail the normalized assumptions because those can alarmingly "constrict both the identity options for culturally diverse students and their cognitive and academic engagement" (Cummins, 2009b, p. 262). Furthermore, Cummins optimistically proposes that having been sensitized and reoriented about the value of students' linguistic and cultural resources, educators can still have the options to resist coercive relations of power, and create spaces for collaborative relations of power. Such choice can be made even if the coercive relations of power occupies the social space in the wider society. Irrespective of the institutional challenges and social pressures, educators can design how they can orchestrate classroom interactions, and thus affirm their students' identities. Cummins (2009b, p. 262) underlines that the following list of options can possibly create collaborative relations of power, affirm identities, and optimize cognitive and academic engagement:

- in how they interact with students;
- in how they engage them cognitively;
- in how they activate their prior knowledge;
- in how they use technology to amplify imagination;
- in how they involve parents in their children's education; and
- in what they communicate to students regarding home language and culture.

In the end, we would like to emphasize that the paradigmatic stance of transformative pedagogy and collaborative relations of power as envisioned, could create a genuine inclusive education. We believe that this could result in numerous apparent advantages such as smooth and natural transfer, intake and production of knowledge, effortless concept formulation, cognitive flexibility, memorization-free, and productive educational outcomes. At broader societal level, it could potentially ensure representation of multiple perspectives, institutional level recognition and emancipation of local knowledges, promotion of democratic values, and strengthening of an

egalitarian social system. Finally, a multilingual approach could be socio-psychologically uplifting, socio-culturally sensitive, socio-economically empowering, and eco-linguistically friendly.

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