English Medium Instruction in Higher Education in Pakistan: Policies, Perceptions, Problems, and Possibilities

Ahmar Mahboob

Abstract This chapter provides an overview of some of the core issues in English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in higher education (HE) in Pakistan. After contextualising EMI within the larger medium of instruction debate in the country, the chapter critically reviews some of the relevant findings from three major studies on attitudes towards languages in Pakistan. The chapter then evaluates the impact of EMI on academic performance by looking at current research on students' language backgrounds, students' English language proficiency, and research publications by Pakistani academics. The findings of this assessment suggest that the current EMI policies in HE do not enable all students in HE and might actually perpetuate the socio-class variations in the society. Next, the chapter discusses the role of language within EMI and considers what type of 'English' is appropriate within a HE context. Finally, the chapter looks at one project that successfully supported students' English language and literacy skills as an example of how some of the issues discussed in this paper may be redressed. In summary, this paper critically analyses the status and use of EMI in HE in Pakistan and suggests some ways to move forward.

Keywords English medium instruction (EMI) · Higher education · Pakistan · SLATE project

1 Introduction

English in Pakistan has been and arguably will remain the primary medium of instruction (MOI) in institutions of higher education (HE) for the foreseeable future. While there have been some changes in government policies towards MOI in schools since the creation of Pakistan in 1947 (see e.g., Rahman 1996; Mahboob 2002), the role of English in HE has remained relatively consistent (see, e.g.,

A. Mahboob (✉)
Department of Linguistics, University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia
e-mail: ahmar.mahboob@sydney.edu.au

B. Fenton-Smith et al. (eds.), *English Medium Instruction in Higher Education in Asia-Pacific*, Multilingual Education 21, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-51976-0_5

Mansoor 2005; Irfan 2013). This does not, however, imply that the use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in Pakistani universities is not uncontroversial. There are numerous issues in EMI in HE in Pakistan and some of these will be discussed in this chapter. In order to do this, this chapter will discuss the current MOI policies in HE in Pakistan and critically discuss current research on language attitudes and perceptions. The chapter will end with some ideas about how the issues identified may be redressed.

However, before we begin, it needs to be noted that while EMI, especially in the context of higher education, has been on the rise in many parts of the world (see, e.g. Doiz et al. 2013; Taguchi 2014), the situation of EMI in Pakistan is different. One of the main reasons for the recent surge in EMI globally (and specially Europe) is the adoption of policies of globalisation and internationalisation of (higher) education (e.g. the Bologna process in Europe). However, in the context of Pakistan, the presence of EMI is a result of historical processes rather than deliberate decisions to globalize or internationalise its education system (although these arguments are made in support of maintaining EMI, see, e.g. Khan 2015). English has been a core part of the educational and government structures of the region for over a century before the country was established. In such a context, the local debates are not simply about how EMI can be improved, but rather what language(s) should be the MOI. The orientation of the recent research on EMI can be, in contexts such as Pakistan, perhaps counterproductive because it takes EMI as a given and does not engage with broader issues of MOI which are of concern to the local populations (see also Hamid's 2013 review of Doiz et al. 2013). To avoid this limitation, this chapter will start with a discussion of EMI issues in Pakistan within a broader MOI debate.

2 Contextualising EMI Policies in HE

English was introduced to South Asia when the British started developing influence in Mughal India under the guise of the British East India Company. The use and prestige of English grew from that point on. As the Mughal Empire—and the use of Persian as the language of arts, sciences and governance—was neutralised and India became part of the British Empire, English became integrated into the legal, educational, and other systems of the country. Since gaining its independence from the British in 1947, Pakistan has followed a three-language policy: Urdu as the national language, English as the official language, and one language recognized for each province (Canagarajah and Ashraf 2013; Mahboob and Jain 2016). This policy has also been adopted in education, where schools are either English medium, Urdu medium, or, in the case of some schools in Sindh and KP, use the provincial language as the MOI. In the context of universities, however, the primary language of instruction is English across the country (in some departments in certain universities, especially in undergraduate programs in arts and humanities, the MOI may be Urdu).

The choice of maintaining English in Pakistan was both a pragmatic and a political decision. It was pragmatic because it was the language used in government and higher education before independence; the language had already been developed to function in these contexts; and people were already familiar with it in those contexts. And it was political because, in the absence of another local language that served all the functions that English did, selecting another language would (and did—see, e.g., Mansoor 1993) potentially suppress other languages and alienate speakers of those languages.

Pakistan has a linguistic diversity of 0.802 on Greenberg index (Lewis et al. 2016). This number, which is calculated based on the population of each language as a proportion of the total population, suggests that a large number of people do not share their first or heritage language. With over 70 ethno-linguistic groups and only a handful of them used in educational contexts, many feel that the use of a few selected languages poses challenges to literacy and educational development of their children (see, for example, Rahman 1996). This adds further fuel to political conflicts, many of which are grounded in the differences in the socio-economic conditions between various ethno-linguistic and regional groups of people across the country.

Thus, English, partly for political and pragmatic reasons, and partly for a lack of will and effort, has remained a prominent part of the educational context of Pakistan. Today, according to the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education 2009, p. 71; while dated, these are the latest statistics available), 68.3% of government schools use Urdu as the MOI; 15.5% educational institutions in Sindh use Sindhi as the MOI; 9.5% use other languages (Pushto, Balochi, Arabic etc.), and 10.4% use English as the MOI. While precise statistics for private schools are difficult to procure, estimates based on reports from ASER (2012), Coleman and Capstick (2012), Mansoor (2003) and other sources suggest that over 70% of private schools across Pakistan use EMI. Furthermore, as pointed out earlier, most universities in Pakistan use English as the MOI for the majority of the subjects taught (especially in post-graduate and STEM[1] programs). Variations in the MOI at the school level suggest that students entering HE are likely to have varying levels of proficiency in English. The limited number of government EMI schools and the extensive use of EMI in higher education signals a certain degree of misalignment between the government schools MOI policy and the HE MOI policies.

Researchers working in this area (e.g., Bari 2013; Rahman 2010) argue that maintaining English as the MOI in the private and elite schools, while using Urdu (or the provincial language) in the majority of government schools, disadvantages students from lower SES (socio-economic status) backgrounds and perpetuates current socio-economic class differences. They point out that students from higher

[1]STEM = Science Technology Engineering Mathematics.

SES backgrounds have access to better English language education and other resources, which leads to better performance at universities and hence gives them access to better jobs and resources, whereas students from lower SES backgrounds do not have access to good English language education and are largely excluded from these opportunities.

The issue of differential access to English language and its consequences is recognised by the Government of Pakistan as well and is addressed in Sect. 3.5, Overcoming Structural Divides, of the National Education Policy (NEP); however, instead of providing support to and through local languages, the NEP further promotes and reinforces the position of English. The underlying assumption in the NEP is that structural divides can be overcome by giving all students access to English. Policy action 3, Sect. 3.5, of the NEP states:

> Ministry of Education in consultation with Provincial and Area education departments, relevant professional bodies and the wider public, *shall develop a comprehensive plan of action for implementing the English language policy in the shortest possible time, paying particular attention to disadvantaged groups and lagging behind regions* [emphasis added] (Ministry of Education 2009, p. 28).

In addition, policy actions 4–8 state:

4. The curriculum from Class I onward shall include English (as a subject), Urdu, one regional language, mathematics along with an integrated subject.
5. The Provincial and Area Education Departments shall have the choice to select the medium of instruction up to Class V.
6. English shall be employed as the medium of instruction for sciences and mathematics from class IV onwards.
7. For 5 years Provinces shall have the option to teach mathematics and science in English or Urdu/official regional language, but after five years the teaching of these subjects shall be in English only.
8. Opportunities shall be provided to children from low socio-economic strata to learn English language (Ministry of Education 2009, p. 28).

This policy promotes the adoption of English, first as a subject, then as an MOI in schools. As for universities, it should be noted that the NEP does not specifically discuss the MOI issue in higher education at all. This is perhaps because, unlike MOI issues in school education, EMI in HE is not a debated or contested issue in Pakistan. It is assumed that the primary MOI in HE is and will remain English (Rassool and Mansoor 2007).

Habib (2013) notes that language policy decisions for schools are based on parents' demands and the assumption that students need to learn English and learn about science and mathematics through English because English is the language of knowledge-production in these fields. In order to understand this notion better, we will now look at some of the research on preferences for MOI in Pakistan.

3 Perceptions Towards Language and MOI in HE

In this section, we will first review three major studies published since 2000 that provide quantitative data on attitudes towards MOI in HE in Pakistan: Mahboob (2002), Mansoor (2005), and Irfan (2013). Respondents in all three of these studies show a consistent pattern of support for the various languages: Urdu and English are recommended as the two possible choices for MOI in schools; English is recommended as the MOI for HE by the majority of respondents; and there is little support for the teaching/learning of indigenous languages, specially in the context of HE. Thus, a review of these studies corroborates Habib's (2013) observation that the current MOI practices in Pakistan reflect stakeholders' beliefs. However, as we will discuss later in this section, there are a number of issues with all three of these studies, which should lead us to question their validity and use in support of or justifying the current HE MOI policies in the country.

3.1 Three Studies on Language Preference and MOI in HE in Pakistan

3.1.1 Mahboob 2002

In his study, Mahboob (2002) surveyed freshmen students and staff at a large public university in Karachi, Pakistan. The respondents were enrolled in an English language course for freshmen, which was a required subject. A total of 315 students with a range of majors were enrolled in the English language classes during the semester in which data were collected and the students were asked to complete the questionnaire on a voluntary basis. 245 students (approximately 78% of the population taking the course) completed the survey. In addition, the ten English language instructors teaching these courses were also asked to participate in the study. No statistically significant differences were found in responses given by the teachers and the students and therefore the two groups were combined for the purposes of this study.

Table 1 summarizes the findings from Mahboob (2002). Table 1 shows that 76% of the respondents showed a preference for English as the MOI in primary schools; 94.4% stated that it should be the MOI in high schools and at the university level. In contrast, only 65.4% stated that Urdu should be the MOI in primary schools; 37% stated that it should be the MOI in high schools; and 26.5% stated that it should be the MOI at the university level. Of the informants who spoke a language other than Urdu as their first language, only 10% stated that their first language should be the MOI in primary schools, 4% stated that it should be the MOI in high schools, and none of the informants said that it should be the MOI in universities.

Table 1 MOI preferences in Mahboob (2002)

Question	Number of respondents	Yes	No
Is it important to study English?	255	252 (98.8%)	3 (1.2%)
Should English be the medium of instruction for primary education?	250	190 (76%)	60 (24%)
Should English be the medium of instruction for high school education?	248	234 (94.4%)	14 (5.6%)
Should English be the medium of instruction for university education?	250	236 (94.4%)	14 (5.6%)
Is it important to study Urdu?	254	227 (89.4%)	27 (10.6%)
Should Urdu be the medium of instruction for primary education?	246	161 (63.1%)	85 (34.6%)
Should Urdu be the medium of instruction for high school education?	246	91 (37%)	155 (63%)
Should Urdu be the medium of instruction for university education?	245	65 (26.5%)	180 (73.5%)
Is it important to study your first language (other than Urdu)?	50	22 (44%)	28 (56%)
Should your first language be the medium of instruction for primary education?	50	5 (10%)	45 (90%)
Should your first language be the medium of instruction for high school education?	50	2 (4%)	48 (96%)
Should your first language be the medium of instruction for university education?	50	0 (0%)	50 (100%)

Table 2 MOI preferences in Mansoor (2005)

	Students (n = 2160)	Teachers (n = 121)	Parents (n = 63)
Regional Language (%)	12.30	17.40	12.7
Urdu (%)	48.70	41.30	71.40
English (%)	90.80	88.40	96.80

3.1.2 Mansoor 2005

Mansoor (2005) reports on a survey of 2136 students, 121 teachers and 63 parents across public and private sector HE from all the capital cities of Pakistan. As such, this is one of the largest published surveys of attitudes and perceptions towards languages in education in Pakistan. The relevant results from this study are summarized in Table 2. These results do not separate between the levels of education.

Table 2 shows that, once again, the respondents showed strongest support for EMI, followed by Urdu, and then regional languages. The results also showed that, as compared to the teachers and students, a noticeably larger number of parents supported Urdu as an MOI, but not regional languages. Finally, Table 2 shows a higher level of support for regional languages in comparison to Mahboob (2002),

but these numbers are still weak in comparison to Urdu, and especially English. The results of Mansoor's study also provide evidence that there is a preference for English as MOI across the three categories of stakeholders surveyed.

3.1.3 Irfan 2013

In a more recent study, Irfan (2013) explored the perceptions and attitudes towards EMI of 451 post-graduate students and 35 teachers in Master of Education programs in two public universities in Lahore, Pakistan. In both these universities, the undergraduate programs in education use Urdu as the MOI whereas the postgraduate (MA) programs use English as the MOI. Some relevant findings from Irfan's study are presented in Table 3.

In Table 3, once again, we see overwhelming support for the use of English in HE (92.5% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "English language is essential for Higher Education in Pakistan"). This number is comparable to that reported in the other two studies summarized earlier. In addition, this study included questions that explore the use of and perceptions towards English and Urdu in the particular contexts of the participants. The results show that only about 66.5% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the use of English in an MA education program (the program they were enrolled in). Furthermore, the results suggest that, regardless of the official policy, the actual programs are bilingual in Urdu and English: respondents stated that both English and Urdu are used as MOI and that they use both of these languages (and more often Urdu) when interacting with teachers. In fact, more respondents stated that they used Urdu with their teachers than English.

In summary, the selected results from Irfan's study presented here show that while English may be perceived to be the most preferred language of instruction in HE in the survey, this preference does not necessarily imply that participants want EMI in their own context; and, even where they do, the actual institutional practices may be multilingual. In addition to the data discussed above, Irfan's study also

Table 3 Some relevant data from MA education students' preferences for MOI in Irfan (2013)

	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
English is essential for HE	2.20	1.30	28.20	64.30
English should be used as MOI in MA education programs	8.85	9.70	40.80	25.75
English is used as MOI in my program	4	24.60	39.20	17.30
Urdu is used as MOI in my program	2.90	20.80	42.60	12.60
Using English with teachers	14.20	37.50	20.60	4.70
Using Urdu with teachers	2.20	11.10	49	25.30

looks at the question of 'which English' (cf. World Englishes) should be used in HE in Pakistan—an issue that will be taken up in a later section of this chapter.

Building on Mahboob (2002) and Mansoor (2005), Irfan's (2013) study provides a more in-depth view of the issues and practices in two specific programs in Pakistan. However, as will be discussed below, all three of these studies have some serious limitations making the validity of their use in supporting or developing language in education policies questionable.

4 Issues with Current Research on Attitudes Towards MOI in Pakistan

While the results of the current surveys of attitudes towards EMI and other MOI in HE in Pakistan appear to be consistent, there are at least four serious issues with these studies.

1. All three of the studies are based on data collected from students at universities; missing in these studies are the views of those who did not or are unable to attend universities.
2. All three of the studies collected data using instruments written in English; missing in these studies are views of participants who may not have literacy in English.
3. All three of the studies are based on data collected in major urban centers; missing in these studies are views of people who are not based in urban centers.
4. None of the three studies explore the performance of the students in their current programs; missing in these studies is a discussion of how the current MOI policies affect students' performance and achievement.

Since the data for these three studies were collected from students and teachers at institutions of higher education in English and in urban centers, where a majority of subjects are taught through EMI and where English is more prevalent than in the rural settings, it is not surprising that many of the respondents think that English is extremely important in and relevant to HE. In many ways, the data for these studies come from those 'already converted'. There is a need for research that explores the views of those who are not in the universities, don't have literacy skills in English, and are not based in major urban areas, to get a more holistic view of the issues. Research sourced from a more representative sample of the Pakistani population can help identify the problems with the current policies and practices and lead to thinking and actions that enable greater participation of the Pakistani population in HE. The selection of participants in the studies reviewed above skews the findings and thus (perhaps falsely) reinforces the current HE policies and practices in Pakistan.

At this time, there appear to be no studies that provide a comprehensive review of attitudes towards EMI and other MOI in HE in Pakistan. This is a gap that needs to be addressed as this research can provide a broad-based analysis of people's beliefs and attitudes towards languages across Pakistan and help develop a stronger language-in-education policy.

5 Problems with EMI in Pakistan

A review of the current literature on MOI in HE in Pakistan helps identify two critical issues that need further discussion: EMI and academic performance, and which English in EMI.

5.1 EMI and Academic Performance

At present there appear to be no published statistical data that specifically looks at the relationship between EMI and academic performance in Pakistan. However, there are a few indirect and secondary indicators that suggest that a large majority of students (and staff) have difficulty in dealing with EMI in HE in Pakistan. Below, we will discuss three of these: students' language backgrounds, students' English language proficiency, and research publications by Pakistani academics.

5.1.1 Students' Language Backgrounds

As pointed out earlier, close to 90% of the public schools in Pakistan use a language other than English as the MOI; however, most universities—public and private—use English as the primary MOI. This reflects a misalignment between the school and HE language-in-education policies and implies that a large number of students who enter EMI universities in Pakistan come from a non-EMI background (and have limited English language proficiency).

Current studies that provide demographic data of HE students largely support this observation. In addition, data show some differences across various institutions of HE in at least three dimensions: major/department, location/ranking of university, and private/public-status of university. For example, in Irfan's (2013) study, which was carried out in the Faculty of Education (which has relatively low prestige in Pakistan) at two universities in Lahore, approximately 80% of the students came from an Urdu medium background. In Mahboob's (2002) study, which was based in one of the most prestigious universities in Karachi, 75% of the participants came with an EMI background. However, this number fell to less than 20% for the Department of Islamic Studies. This suggests that departments with higher status attract more students from an EMI background. In addition, there are also

differences between private and public universities. Mansoor (2003) reports that 65% of the students in private HE institutions have an EMI background, as compared to 40% in public HE institutions.

These differences in students' MOI background have implications for their performance. As noted in Mahboob (2014a), students who come from a non-EMI background into an EMI university and have low English language proficiency are unable to fully understand the lectures or the readings assigned to them. These students also have difficulty in doing their assignments and in completing writing tasks (see also Rassool and Mansoor 2007; Din 2015).

5.1.2 Students' English Language Proficiency

Mansoor (2003) reports that of the 1928 students in her survey, the average English language score was only 47/100. The detailed English language scores of the students in her study are given in Table 4.

Students' English language scores in Table 4 shows that while there are some differences between public and private HE institutions, the average English language score in both types of institutions is quite low. This result is not surprising for at least two reasons. First, as discussed earlier, a large proportion of the students entering universities come from a non-EMI background and therefore have limited English language proficiency. Second, there are only limited, if any, resources available within the universities to provide appropriate English language and literacy support to the students (Shamim 2011).

The problem with students' low English language and literacy abilities is something that the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan, is aware of and is trying to address. In personal communication, Prof. Atta-ur-Rehman (April 8, 2011), the founding director of HEC, wrote:

> Unfortunately, many students at universities across Pakistan today do not have the academic literacy that allows them to fully realize their intellectual potential. Students struggle to engage with the academic material in their courses because of their limited English language academic skills… This may lead to three negative consequences: it may encourage rote-learning; it may lead to plagiarism and cheating; and it may result in students failing or getting low marks. This may also have negative consequences for students beyond their university life when they are unable to find appropriate jobs in their field and/or perform effectively in their professional environments.

Table 4 Students' English test scores (Mansoor 2003)

Scores (%)	Public (%)	Private (%)	Both (%)
Total students	1250	678	1928
<33	32.4	14.9	26.2
33–50	32.0	24.9	29.5
50–70	30.5	37.9	33.1
70–80	4.7	17.1	9.1
80 and above	0.4	5.2	2.1
Mean score	43.0	54.5	47.0

In order to compensate for students' low English language proficiency, some faculty members disassociate the relationship between content and language and only focus on 'factual' or 'content' knowledge and ignore language. In discussing this issue in a recent study of the relationship between language and assessment in a rural HE context in Pakistan, Din (2015) includes the following quote from one of his participants:

> As far as students' writing is visible and understandable at this level it's ok for me because that's what I expect from them. It is not necessary that they are expert in language and know grammar well. Grammatical mistakes do not matter in communicating ideas. The course I teach is not supposed to make them expert in language (p. 143).

This separation of language and content is a false dichotomization because content cannot be separated from language: content (and meaning) is construed and represented through language and the choice of language impacts what is understood by the readers/listeners. The inability of the students to develop field/discipline specific language abilities impacts both their ability to learn from and contribute to their discipline (for a detailed discussion of this, see Dreyfus et al. 2016).

Another common strategy used by teachers to compensate for the English language limitations of their students is to code-switch. Mahboob and Jain (2016) provide a review of research on bilingual education in Pakistan (and India) and note that (a) there is a dearth of research on bilingualism in Pakistan (Jabeen 2010), (b) the research that does exist, focuses on stakeholders' attitudes and perceptions towards code-switching (Gulzar 2010a, b; Gulzar and Qadir 2010; Tariq et al. 2013), and (c) this research advocates for the adoption of bilingual education in Pakistan (Raja 2014).

Both of these strategies (dichotomization of language and content, and use of code-switching) are also found in other countries with similar situations—see, for example, Flowerdew et al. (2000) and Mahboob (2014b) for comparable observations from Hong Kong. In addition to these two strategies, other strategies reported in the literature include a 'dumbing down' of material and assignments, and use of multiple-choice or short answer type questions in assessments. As a result of these practices, students are able to navigate through their university life with only limited use of English and do not necessarily develop their English language literacy during their stay at the University.

Research (e.g. Mansoor 2003, 2005) also indicates that it is not just students who have low English language proficiency, but many of the faculty members also have similar problems. Many of the staff members are graduates from local universities and had language related problems during their own student lives, not unlike their current students. This situation often creates a cycle where students, with low English language skills, 'manage' to graduate and become faculty members and teach another group of students with similar language problems. This perpetuates language-based academic problems in HE and impacts, amongst other things, academic research productivity.

Current studies also suggest that there is a socio-economic dimension to students' English language proficiency and that students coming from higher SES backgrounds (who typically attend elite private EMI schools) have a much higher English language proficiency than those from lower SES backgrounds. For example, Shamim (2011) drawing on Shamim and Tribble (2005), states that there is a "positive correlation of high family income with students' higher levels of proficiency in English" (p. 8). She also points out that "in students' assessment of their current language skills, as used in the academic domain, the upper group was about twice as heavily represented in the categories of 'good' and 'excellent' compared to the lower third of the population" (p. 9). This observation is also supported by a more recent study by Manan and David (2014) carried out at one of the top-ranked engineering universities in the province of Baluchistan. This study shows that of the 162 participants in the study (76% of whom studied in private EMI schools), about 67% of the participants self-reported that they had 'good' understanding of English and 19% said that they had 'very good' understanding of English.

The findings from these studies suggest that students who come from privileged backgrounds tend to have higher English language proficiency scores, get admitted to the better institutions of HE in the country (all of which are in urban centers), and do relatively well in them. In contrast, students from lower SES, who have weaker English language proficiency, are admitted to less prestigious departments and/or universities. Thus, in many ways, English reinforces the socio-economic class variations in the society by giving different opportunities to students from different backgrounds. It is this reinforcement of the socio-economic class variations through education (and especially EMI) that has led researchers such as Khattak (2014), Rahman (2004), and Shamim (2011) to label the current educational system in Pakistan as 'linguistic' and 'educational' apartheid. In the words of one respondent in Mansoor's (2005) study:

> … we are talking about Higher Education but 70% of our population live in rural areas and whose parents also are not literate… nobody cares about that 70% of the population. In the 8th Grade 90% (of the) students fail just because they cannot pass the English subject. Then when they reach matriculation level 90% or 80% (of the) students fail because English is compulsory. If English compulsory was not there, the students might have studied further… (p. 252).

5.1.3 Research Publications by Pakistani Academics

A third indirect indicator that may shed some light on the possible impact of EMI in HE in Pakistan is an evaluation of research publications from Pakistani universities.

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan uses the ISI Web of Knowledge (including Science Citation Index (SCI-Expanded), Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), and Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI)) databases for monitoring the quality of research outputs in Pakistan. In addition to ISI ranked

journals, HEC also recognizes some of the locally published journals, but all of these journals must be published in English, or, minimally (in case of certain subjects) publish abstracts in English.

While the number of publications coming from Pakistan has increased in recent years, they are still quite low, as will be seen below. One potential reason for this (in addition to other reasons such as research training, access to resources, infrastructure and support, etc.), based on informal discussions with academics and administrators at Pakistani universities, is the low English language proficiency of staff and students at the universities. The limited English language proficiency of the PhD students as well as the academic staff makes it difficult for them to write in ways that conform to the norms of their discipline or meet the specific genre requirements of the journals.

While the HEC gives serious weightage to ISI, a review of the ISI database shows that of the 14,000 journals included in the ISI listing, only 11 are published in Pakistan—all of them in STEM. There are no social sciences journals published in Pakistan on the ISI list even though, according to the HEC website, the largest category of PhD students graduate with a degree in social sciences.

Based on data available on the HEC website (which are not current for all indicators), there were 163 HEC recognised institutes of HE in Pakistan in 2014; there were 34,444 faculty members (26.6% of whom had PhDs) in 2012–2013; and Pakistan produced 11,846 PhDs between 2002 and 2014. At the same time, there was only a total of 7966 publications from across the country in HEC recognized journals in 2014; this implies that the average number of publications per faculty member in 2014 was approximately 0.23. While this number is low, it does reflect a gradual increase in the number of publications in Pakistan over the years: e.g., while only 69 universities had any publications at all in 2008 and 5 had more than 100; this number increased to 82 universities with at least one publication and 12 with 100 or more publications in 2010.

In the only study that I could find on research productivity in Pakistan, Musthaq et al. (2012) evaluate the research productivity of Pakistani universities in Health Sciences and note that the number of publications coming from Pakistan is considerably lower than the international standards. Arguing that research productivity is an indicator of the quality of higher education institutions, the authors concluded that Pakistani medical colleges are "imparting medical education way below the international standards" (p. 628). This observation is in alignment with our earlier discussion of the impact of low language proficiency on university teaching and learning.

With many students entering EMI HE with low English language proficiency, a lack of appropriate language and literacy support for the students within HE, and a generally low language and literacy profile of the academic staff, university teaching is often 'dumbed down' and 'language' and 'content' disassociated. This leads to students' limited understanding of the relationship between language and (disciplinary) knowledge and impacts their performance within and beyond their university lives. One set of questions that arises from this discussion is about the

nature of language and the relationship between language, (disciplinary) knowledge, and society. We will consider this next.

5.2 Which English in EMI?

As pointed out above, some academics in Pakistan disassociate 'language' with 'content' and believe that students' language has little to do with their learning or use of content and disciplinary knowledge. Others, for example, Irfan (2013) argue that the problem lies with the emphasis on 'British' or 'American' English and that the solution would be to use 'Pakistani English' as the norm in education and assessment in Pakistan. However, as we will discuss in this section, both of these positions are problematic.

Irfan (2013) states that out of the 451 participants in her study, 79.6% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'Your preference is for Pakistani English', and 85.4% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'Your teachers speak Pakistani English'. Bolstered by these results, she argues that, "the description of the notion of World Englishes movement in language policies can be positively accommodating for the acceptability of Pakistani English (PakE) for academic and assessment purposes in universities" (p. 22).

While the position that Irfan takes is understandable, this is a highly complex issue. On the one hand, the use of PakE can help students in their immediate context; but, on the other hand, PakE will not enable students to read literature written in academic English published in other parts of the world; and, furthermore, their use of PakE in writing may limit their readership (and cause difficulties in publishing and contributing to international discussions). To understand this better, we need to develop a broad understanding of language variation and how it relates to educational issues. Given space constraints, I will only do this briefly and readers may want to look at Mahboob (2014b, 2015a, in press) and Mahboob and Lin (in press) for more detailed descriptions of the model presented below.

Mahboob's framework of language variation is based on four dimensions along which language can vary: user, use, mode, and time. Of these, Mahboob uses the first three to develop the three-dimensional framework of language variation (Fig. 1). The 'user' cline of language variation can be based on 'low' vs. 'high' social distance. People who have low social distance (i.e. they have many shared social factors, e.g., age, education, ethnicity, family, gender, location, origin, religion, profession, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, etc.) may have unique ways of using language that reflect their relationship and this language may not always be transparent to others; when interacting with people with higher social distance, we tend to avoid the 'local' features of language as they may cause problems with communication. The 'use' dimension of the model can be understood in terms of how language varies whether we are engaged in 'everyday/casual' (e.g. talk about weather as an ice breaker) discourses or in 'specialised/technical' discourses (e.g. talk about weather at a climate change conference). 'Modes' of

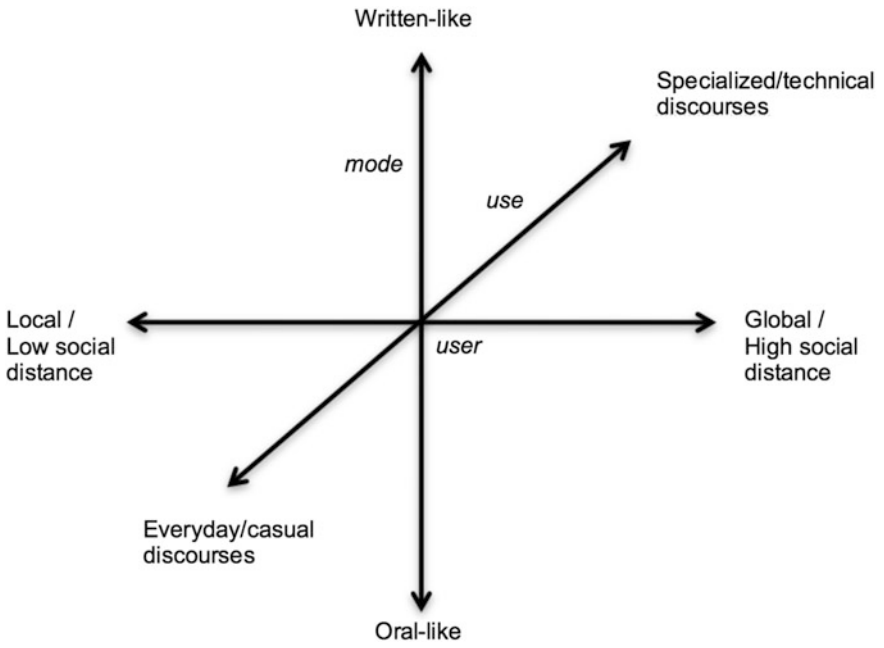

Fig. 1 Mahboob's 3-dimensional framework of language variation

communication include aural, visual, and mixed channels of communication (multimodal). The fourth dimension, time, while very important to a study of language variation, is not considered as critical in its application to contemporary educational issues.

Mahboob's framework helps identify eight broad domains (Table 5), with each domain including a range of variations (or sub-domains), based on varying combinations of users, uses, and mode. Table 5 below lists the eight domains,[2] identifies areas of linguistic study that focus their research on that domain, and gives examples of where one might find such language.

Among other things, Table 5 indicates that what we may call 'Pakistani English' predominantly belongs to domain 1 and 2 (and perhaps to domains 3 and 4, but this is under-researched). This language is different from that of domains 7 and 8, which is used in higher education, academia, and research contexts. There is substantial variation within sub-domains of 7 and 8 depending on the specific focus and mix of the elements of the three dimensions of language variation. In addition, this model also points out that content (use) is construed through language and is not independent of the users or the mode. Given this understanding of how language varies

[2]The ordering of the domains here is different than in earlier publications on this framework (Mahboob 2014b, 2015a). The mode dimension has been reversed here to reflect the primacy of oral language over written language.

Table 5 The eight (broad) domains of language variation

	Domains	Study in linguistics	Example
1	Local, oral, everyday	Dialectology, World Englishes	Family members planning their vacation
2	Local, written, everyday	Dialectology, World Englishes	Old school friends exchanging e-mails with each other
3	Local, oral, specialized	Anthropological linguistics; needs more attention	Members of an Aboriginal community talking about the local weather system
4	Local, written, specialized	Needs more attention	Newsletter produced by and for a community of farmers in rural Australia
5	Global, oral, everyday	ELF (English as a Lingua Franca)	Casual conversations amongst people from different parts of the world
6	Global, written, everyday	Genre studies; traditional grammar	International news agencies reporting on events
7	Global, oral, specialized	ELF; Language for specific purposes; genre studies	Conference presentations
8	Global, written, specialized	Language for specific purposes; genre studies	Academic papers

across different domains and sub-domains, the use 'Pakistani English' as the target language will not address the issues of language and literacy in the context of HE in Pakistan. In fact, it may further complicate the issue. Instead, what is needed is a pedagogy that recognizes students' local languages (domains 1 and 2) and helps them develop the language needed to succeed in global everyday (domains 5 and 6) and global specialised (domains 7 and 8) contexts (see also Mahboob and Lin in press).

6 Possible Directions

Previous research has listed a number of different recommendations that may help redress the current problems in EMI HE in Pakistan. These include, for example, improving quality of English education in schools (e.g., Din 2015); improving access to resources and infrastructure (e.g. Musthaq et al. 2012; Rassool and Mansoor 2007); providing appropriate language and literacy support for staff and students (e.g. Mansoor 2005; Shamim 2011); amending the language in education policies (e.g., Coleman 2010; Khan 2015); and resourcing and implementing these policies (e.g. Mahboob 2002). While all of these recommendations are important and need consideration, here I will describe some of my work with colleagues that

developed a successful intervention project for a university in Hong Kong, which faced many issues that are similar to those described in this chapter. The purpose of sharing this is to provide a broad description of a project that was used to redress many of the issues observed in Pakistan and therefore to suggest a potential model that may be adapted in Pakistan (and other similar contexts). Given space constraints, I will only briefly introduce the project here and readers may want to look at Dreyfus et al. (2016) for a book-length description and discussion of this project.

The Scaffolding Literacy in Academic and Tertiary Environments (SLATE) project aimed to help non-English speaking background (NESB) undergraduate university students develop their English language and literacy needs at an English medium university in Hong Kong. The SLATE project incorporated aspects of genre theory (Martin and Rose 2008), sociology of education (Bernstein 2000), and socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky 1978). Genre pedagogies have drawn on Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) theory, which views language as a social semiotic system (Halliday 1978), that is, a resource for making meaning in social context from which notions of ideology and power are inseparable (Eggins 2004; Martin and Rose, 2003). Within genre theory, genres are defined as 'staged goal-oriented social processes' which function in society as institutionalized discourse (Martin and Rose 2003; Martin and White 2005). A central idea of using this understanding of genre in education, especially in teaching literacy and writing, is that learners of all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds must be taught these genres explicitly in order to succeed in society. Genre pedagogues argue that if standard genres (domains 5–8 in Mahboob's 3-dimensional framework) are not taught effectively to students, they will be unable to produce texts that are valued in global and academic disciplines and therefore not be able to fully benefit from educational experiences.

The SLATE team provided scaffolded support to their students by adapting the teaching learning cycle (Rothery and Stenglin 1994) to suit the needs of an online literacy support project. In developing this 'consultative cycle' (see Mahboob et al. 2010), students were first provided with models and notes about the nature of their assignments, with explicit references made to the type of language resources they needed to draw on in order to successfully complete their assessment tasks. This phase of the intervention was called frontloading (deconstruction). Students were subsequently asked to draft their assignments, and this drafting work was supported by the language coaches through a feedback process, called 'supported independent construction' (see Mahboob and Devrim 2013; Mahboob 2015b). In some courses, the SLATE team also experimented with online joint construction (Dreyfus and Macnaught 2013) between the frontloading and the supported independent construction phases. The students used the support provided to them in drafting and revising their work before submitting their final assignments to their lecturers. The lecturers then graded these assignments based on their disciplinary criteria. The expected result of this consultative cycle was a gradual and scaffolded development of students' discipline-specific language ability.

An evaluation of the SLATE project (Mahboob et al. 2013) showed that it achieved its intended outcomes—which were to provide embedded, discipline-specific language and literacy support to the students. The large majority of the students participating in the project found the support material and the feedback useful and used it to develop their academic language and literacy. These findings are very encouraging and show one way in which other courses and institutions may integrate the lessons learnt from the SLATE project in developing discipline-specific language and literacy needs of their students. In the context of Pakistani HE, such a project may be adapted to provide embedded language and literacy support to students (and staff?) to develop the skills necessary to better engage with and contribute to the academic and professional communities.

7 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter provided an overview of some of the core issues in EMI in HE in Pakistan. The chapter started off with contextualising EMI within the larger MOI debate in the country. It then summarized some of the relevant findings from three major studies on attitudes towards languages in Pakistan and identified four issues that question the validity of these studies. The chapter argued that in order to inform a broad-based and responsive language-in-education policy, we need new studies that provide a more comprehensive analysis of language attitudes and perceptions in the country. The paper then discussed two issues that arose out of a review of relevant literature. First, we evaluated the impact of EMI on academic performance by looking at current research on students' language backgrounds, students' English language proficiency, and research publications by Pakistani academics. The findings of this review suggested that the current EMI policies in HE do not enable all students in HE and might actually perpetuate the socio-class variations in the society. Next, we discussed the role of language within EMI and considered what type of 'English' is appropriate within a HE context. In doing this, we pointed out that what we need is a pedagogy that helps students develop a globally oriented language. Finally, we looked at one project that successfully supported students' English language and literacy skills in Hong Kong as an example of how some of the issues discussed in this paper may be redressed.

While this chapter identified and discussed a number of issues and problems in EMI in HE in Pakistan, it also showed that considerable effort and research is currently being undertaken to identify and address these problems. One measurable indicator of this is the sustained, albeit small, increase in the number of ISI publications coming from the country. This is a positive sign and suggests that some of the new policies and practices developed by HEC are working. What is needed is more sustained research, effort and dedication until HE and research in Pakistan reaches a tipping point.

References

ASER. (2012). *Annual status of education report*. Lahore: ASER.

Bari, F. (2013, June 21). In which medium? *The Daily Dawn*. http://www.dawn.com/news/1019596. Accessed February 12, 2015.

Bernstein, B. (2000). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: Theory, research, critique*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Canagarajah, A. S., & Ashraf, H. (2013). Multilingualism and education in South Asia: Resolving policy/practice dilemmas. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 33,* 258–285.

Coleman, H. (2010). *Teaching and learning in Pakistan: The role of language in education*. Islamabad: British Council Pakistan.

Coleman, H., & Capstick, T. (2012). *Language in education in Pakistan: Recommendations for policy and practice*. Islamabad: British Council.

Din, K. (2015). Teachers' perceptions about the role of English in students' assessment and current practices in public sector higher education institutions in Gilgit, Pakistan. *International Journal of Social Science Studies, 3*(3), 138–148.

Doiz, A., Lasagabaster, D., & Sierra, J. M. (2013). *English-medium instruction at universities: Global challenges*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Dreyfus, S., & Macnaught, L. (2013). Joint construction in the SLATE project. *Linguistics and the Human Sciences, 7*(7), 77–99.

Dreyfus, S., Humphrey, S., Mahboob, A., & Martin, J. R. (2016). *Genre pedagogy in higher education: The SLATE project*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Eggins, S. (2004). *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics*. London: Frances Pinter.

Flowerdew, J., Miller, L., & Li, D. C. S. (2000). Chinese lecturers' perceptions, problems and strategies in lecturing in English to Chinese-speaking students. *RELC Journal, 31*(1), 116–138.

Gulzar, M. A. (2010a). *Classroom discourse in bilingual context: Effects of code switching on language learning in Pakistan Tefl classroom.* (PhD), National University of Modern Language, Islamabad.

Gulzar, M. A. (2010b). Code-switching: Awareness about its utility in bilingual classrooms. *Bulletin of Education and Research, 32*(2), 23–44.

Gulzar, M. A., & Qadir, S. A. (2010). Issues of language(s) choice and use: A Pakistani perspective. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences, 30*(2), 413–424.

Habib, M. (2013). Education in Pakistan's Punjab: Outcomes and interventions. *The Lahore Journal of Economics,* 18(SE), 21–48.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic*. London: Edward Arnold.

Hamid, O. (2013). English-medium instruction at universities: Global challenges, edited by Aintzane Doiz, David Lasagabaster and Juan Manuel Sierra. *Current Issues in Language Planning, 15*(1), 108–110.

Irfan, H. (2013). *An investigation of two universities' postgraduate students and their teachers' perceptions of policy and practice of English medium of instruction (EMI) in Pakistani universities.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK.

Jabeen, S. (2010). Research in bilingualism: A dilemma! *Explorations, 21,* 67–79.

Khan, A. (2015). *A narrative ethnography of primary school teachers' language perceptions, preferences and practices in rural Pakistan.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand.

Khattak, S. G. (2014). A comparative analysis of the elite-English-medium schools, State Urdu-medium Schools, and Dini-madaris in Pakistan. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Comparative Studies, 1*(1), 92–107.

Lewis, M. P., Gary, F. S., & Charles, D. F. (2016). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world* (nineteenth ed.). Dallas, Texas: SIL International.

Mahboob, A. (2002). "No English, no future!" Language policy in Pakistan. In S. Obeng & B. Hartford (Eds.), *Political independence with linguistic servitude: The politics about languages in the developing world* (pp. 15–39). New York: NOVA Science.

Mahboob, A. (2014a). Meeting the challenges of English medium higher education in Hong Kong. *International Review of Applied Linguistics, 52*(2), 183–203.
Mahboob, A. (2014b). Language variation and education: A focus on Pakistan. In S. Buschfeld, T. Hoffmann, M. Huber, & A. Kautzsch (Eds.), *The evolution of Englishes* (Vol. 2, pp. 267–281). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
Mahboob, A. (2015a). Identity management, language variation, and English language textbooks. In D. Djenar, A. Mahboob, & K. Cruickshank (Eds.), *Language and identity across modes of communication* (pp. 153–177). Boston: Mouton de Gruyter.
Mahboob, A. (2015b). Understanding and providing 'cohesive' and 'coherent' feedback on writing. *Writing and Pedagogy, 7*(2), 1–22.
Mahboob, A. (in press). Understanding language variation: Implications of the NNEST lens for TESOL teacher education programs. In J. de D. Martínez Agudo (Ed.), *Native and non-native speakers in English language teaching: Implications and challenges for teacher education*. Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.
Mahboob, A., Chan, A., & Webster, J. (2013). Evaluating the SLATE project. *Linguistics and the Human Sciences, 7,* 261–277.
Mahboob, A., & Devrim, D. (2013). Supporting independent construction online: Feedback in the SLATE project. *Linguistics and the Human Sciences, 7,* 101–123.
Mahboob, A., & Jain, R. (2016). Bilingual education in Pakistan and India. O. Garcia and A. Lin (Eds.) *Encyclopedia of language and education: Bilingual education*. New York: Springer.
Mahboob, A., & Lin, A. (in press). Local languages as a resource in (language) education. In A. F. Selvi & Rudolph, N. (Eds.), *Contextualizing education for glocal interaction: Issues and implications*. New York: Springer.
Mahboob, A., Dreyfus, S., Martin, J., & Humphrey, S. (2010). Appliable linguistics and English language teaching: Scaffolding literacy in adult and tertiary environments (SLATE) project. In A. Mahboob & N. Knight (Eds.), *Appliable Linguistics: Texts, Contexts, and Meanings*. London: Continuum.
Manan, S. A., & David, M. K. (2014). Mapping ecology of literacies in educational setting: The case of local mother tongues vis-à-vis Urdu and English languages in Pakistan. *Language and Education, 28*(3), 203–222.
Mansoor, S. (1993). *Punjabi, Urdu, English in Pakistan: A sociolinguistic study*. Vanguard: Lahore.
Mansoor, S. (2003). Language planning in higher education: Issues of access and equity. *The Lahore Journal of Economics, 8,* 17–42.
Mansoor, S. (2005). *Language planning in higher education: A case study of Pakistan*. Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press.
Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2003). *Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause*. London: Continuum.
Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2008). *Genre relations: Mapping culture*. London: Equinox.
Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. London & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Ministry of Education. (2009). *National education policy*. Islamabad: Government of Pakistan.
Musthaq, A., Abid, M., & Qureshi, M. A. (2012). Assessment of research output at higher level of education in Pakistan. *Journal of Pakistan Medical Association, 62*(6), 628–632.
Raja, F. U. (2014). Bilingual education system at primary schools of Pakistan. *Journal of Research (Humanities), L*, 77–89.
Rahman, T. (1996). *Language and politics in Pakistan*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.
Rahman, T. (2004). *Denizens of alien worlds: A study of education, inequality and polarisation in Pakistan*. Karachi and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Rahman, T. (2010). *Language policy, identity and religion: Aspects of the civilisation of the Muslims of Pakistan and North India*. Islamabad: Quaid-i-Azam University.
Rassool, N., & Mansoor, S. (2007). Contemporary issues in language, education and development in Pakistan. In N. Rassool (Ed.), *Global issues in language, education and development: Perspectives from postcolonial countries* (pp. 218–244). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Rothery, J., & Stenglin, M. (1994). *Writing a book review: A unit of work for junior secondary English* (Write it Right Resources for Literacy and Learning). Sydney: Metropolitan East Disadvantaged Schools Program.

Shamim, F. (2011). English as the language for development in Pakistan: Issues, challenges and possible solutions. In H. Coleman (Ed.), *Dreams and realities: Developing countries and the English language* (pp. 2–21). London: British Council.

Shamim, F., & Tribble, C. (2005). *Current provision for English language teaching in higher education in Pakistan.* Unpublished research report. Karachi: Institute for Educational Development, Aga Khan University.

Taguchi, N. (2014). English-medium education in the global society. Introduction to the special issue. *International Review of Applied Linguistics, 52*(2), 89–98.

Tariq, A. R., Bilal, H. A., Abbas, N., & Mahmood, A. (2013). Functions of code-switching in bilingual classrooms. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences, 3*(14), 29–34.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.