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An autoethnography of a transformative odyssey: decolonizing anthropology, the hegemony of English, and the pursuit of plurilogies

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In this autoethnographic account of my own transformative odyssey, via drawing on my personal experiences as a Pakistani anthropologist, I explore the pervasive impacts of English language hegemony in academia. Contextualizing this hegemony within the ongoing discussions on the possibility of "decolonizing anthropology," I ask about the possibility and affordability of promoting publications in native languages, thereby challenging the status quo wherein non-native English-speaking authors bear the financial burdens of translations. Also, I question the abilities and readiness of major anthropological platforms to embrace sessions or panels in native languages to promote *plurilogies*—a term I created to refer to the coexistence and acceptance by major anthropological platforms of multiple diverse perspectives, narratives, or wisdoms. By asking these questions, I hope to prompt a reevaluation of the dominance of English within the field as well as a reflexive anthropology that urges anthropologists to seek innovative means of communication and understanding.

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The beginning of a transformative journey

In agreement with Reed-Danahay (1997) that autoethnography is a rewriting of the self and the social, in this article, I present my own transformative journey, which, as I will demonstrate, contains challenges, opportunities, coping mechanisms, and a way forward. By linking to the "politics of the possible" and to "pluriversal politics" (Escobar, 2020), I elaborate on the legacy of colonization, in particular the hegemony of the English language in academia, which has posed significant challenges for me (and for many others as well) throughout my academic career.

I connect this hegemony to the current debates on "decolonizing anthropology"—and provocatively ask whether it is actually possible for anthropology to "decolonize" the discipline and to what extent? My provocations include various questions regarding reconstructing anthropology and promoting many anthropologies (Ali, 2023). Can anthropology, for instance, and "reputable" academic journals, in particular, afford to allow publications in native languages and to provide prompt and free-of-charge English translations of such works? Why must the onus of doing so fall on their authors who are not native English speakers, who must often pay themselves for translations that they may face challenges to proofread and validate? Can the major anthropological platforms afford to allow panels and/or sessions in native languages?

With these pressing questions, I challenge anthropologists to question the dominance of English in our mutual field and to find new ways of communicating with and understanding each other. The discipline should accept as well as promote what I call *plurilogies*, an idea that builds on the concept of "pluriversal" (Escobar, 2020). Extending Escobar's argument, my use of the term "plurilogies" refers to the coexistence and acceptance of multiple diverse perspectives, narratives, or wisdoms—all of which have their own logical ways of thinking. Accepting and promoting that coexistence through anthropological platforms would facilitate the inclusion of a broader range of cultural and intellectual perspectives, thereby enabling their acceptance and contributing to the restructuring of the discipline. By recognizing the plurality of logical ways of understanding and interpreting the world, the term "plurilogies" denotes the acknowledgment and exploration of various sociocultural, linguistic, and theoretical frameworks or knowledge systems rather than a singular dominant perspective. This acceptance, promotion, and practice by anthropology's reputable platforms would provide anthropologists with various possibilities to minimize the impacts of what I have called "colonial debris" (Ali, 2020, 2023) as much as possible on its theories and practices.

A "colonial debris": the hegemony of the English language

Although colonization seems a phenomenon of the past, many of its legacies or colonial debris prevail not merely in anthropology but also endure in Pakistan and in many other countries, despite efforts toward de-colonization (Ogan, 1975; Uddin, 2011; White, 2019). The English language, the world's *lingua franca*, is part of the colonial debris that works as an apparatus or "those basic infrastructures [that] were historically fashioned by and continue to facilitate colonial and imperial power" (Agrama, 2020, p. 16). In order to minimize or eliminate the impacts of these infrastructures, we need to build new structures that are based on and promote anthropology's "other" narratives. Escobar (2020) argues that this restructuring is possible. Yet this challenge is as large in scale and depth as it is intricate in nature. And because decolonizing is as complex a process as being colonized and requires significant efforts to overcome, the forceful tactics and strategies that were used to colonize must be doubled in decolonizing efforts.

Even anthropology—purported to be an equalizing discipline that strongly criticizes colonization and its impacts—perpetuates these impacts by insisting on English as the academic world's *lingua franca*. For anthropologists like me, who learned English as a sixth language, this lingua franca stands as a barrier to our academic success. For non-native English speakers, trying to learn this language is an all-consuming effort. And yet just learning to speak and understand it is insufficient; you have to learn writing competently in it. I have spent over three decades studying English, and still, I often need a native English editor to edit/proofread my work, as the proper construction of perfectly grammatical sentences sometimes eludes me. The refinement of my PhD dissertation necessitated a financial outlay of approximately 1500€, a substantive fiscal commitment that presented a formidable challenge within the context of constrained economic resources. This financial exigency was particularly pronounced, given the absence of available funding at the time. Noteworthy is the fact that, even during my tenure as the recipient of a scholarship, the disbursements from the Pakistani government amounted to a modest sum of 975€ per month. This financial constraint highlights a tangible obstacle, warranting meticulous consideration and the strategic allocation of resources to address the essential facets of dissertation completion and refinement. Circumstances like these serve as poignant illustrations of the interplays between socioeconomic exigencies and academic pursuits. Achieving these pursuits requires resolute dedication amid socioeconomic challenges.

To illustrate these interplays, here I provide some autoethnographic vignettes. I started my primary education under a tree in an outdoor "classroom." During this time, our medium of instruction was Sindhi (the provincial language of Sindh Province). Yet we also had to learn Urdu (the national language) and Arabic so we could read and recite the Holy Quran. Moving from primary education to high school, another language was added: English. I still remember how anxious I was about whether I would be able to read in English. It seemed no less than a miracle when I managed to read my first English lesson: "Hello, Hello I am Bachal Qazi" in sixth grade. Before learning English, I spoke Seraiki, Sindhi, a bit of Balochi, Urdu, and could read Arabic. The first two languages were my mother tongues; I was not proficient in the latter three, yet I could read and write in them throughout my school years. As mentioned earlier, English became my sixth language; and at the time, in my sociocultural environment, this language was famous as *gitt-mitt, gitt-mitt* (in Sindhi, it is written as گث مث، گث مث). By saying those words, people meant that English is a language that sounds like gibberish.

Although I completed high school with what was written on my certificate, "flying colors," I was still non-proficient in English. Until I reached the university level, it was possible to write all my papers in the Sindhi language. I remember one incident of my youth when I used to work as a date palm farmer that deeply unsettled me and made me question my qualifications:

> I was coming back after selling dates in Hyderabad, the second-largest city of Sindh province of Pakistan. Because we had to work to earn our livelihood, during every June, July, and August, we used [my family still does] to do highly labor-intensive date-palm work.
>
> One of our fellow *Baikhar* (بيکر) [someone who works in the date palm occupation], asked me to translate a Sindhi sentence into English. It was a widespread practice to assess one's competencies. The sentence was [in Sindhi], *Ahmad Amb Khadha Aahin* (احمد انب کاڌا آهن). After a while, I translated, "Ahmad has *ate* mangoes." The order of the sentence was correct but the verb was not.

> Thereafter, the Baikhar told me that he was a secondary school teacher. He started criticizing me for my mistake during much of the ten-hour ride back to our village on the pothole-filled road. The conclusion of his constant critique *cum* insult was: I had learned nothing, had wasted the money and resources of my family. Within that group of Baikhar, I felt a high level of regret and embarrassment.

His demeaning words considerably affected my mental health, despite my good reputation at school, where I achieved an A-grade and was among only six candidates who successfully passed the secondary examination. Nevertheless, I started questioning myself, thinking that perhaps I had indeed not learned anything appropriate and useful. With strong determination, and before starting my bachelor's degree at a university, I decided that I would learn English properly. The date palm season ended, I began my bachelor's program, and simultaneously joined a private English language tuition center for three months. The promotion of that language course was "*Phar Phar Angraizi Ggālhāyo*" (in Sindhi فر فر انگريزي ڳالهايو) Although the literal meaning is "to speak the language in a flow," it connotes learning to speak like a native English speaker with a proper accent within only three months. The fees per month were 500 Pakistan rupees (around $5USD at that time in 2002).

I started my bachelor's degree with a major in economics, yet my primary focus was on English. Daily, I prepared thousands of English sentences and memorized new words. My efforts and attention to learning this language made my English teacher mention me as an example to my fellows. Due to some personal reasons, our teacher continued the tuition for one more month and then he moved to Karachi – the provincial capital. Luckily, during this one month, I learned more than 20 tenses, active and passive as well as direct and indirect speech. I was very happy that I could write English and thereby avoid any embarrassment to myself or my family. As another consequence, I became famous to my friends as *Englishdan* (in Sindhi, انگلش دان). It literally means the one who is good in English. On many occasions, my friends arranged English competitions with those who were good at speaking that language. I must explain to my readers that, in our local culture, these competitions were on the same level as cockfighting or oxen races, which were regularly held in my Province. For contextualizing these competitions, it is relevant to mention that one highly popular drama named "Choti Si Dunia" (in Urdu, چھوٹی سی دنیا) telecasted by Pakistan Television (PTV) in the 1990s showed such a competition between two Pakistani men: one named Murad Ali Khan who had returned from the United Kingdom after receiving some education there and another named Janu German who had somehow managed to learn the English alphabet and some random English numbers while living in Sindh Province. To every question, Murad Ali Khan answered in English but also spoke some local names, such as those of the umpires, in Sindhi. In contrast, Janu German spoke only either the English alphabet or numbers. Since the umpires did not understand English, this Janu German won the competition because he spoke no Sindhi words.

To continue the story of my journey, I gained my confidence back after achieving some proficiency in English. My university teachers, especially my sociology professor, greatly encouraged me to write my papers for her course in English. Even though taking exams was possible in the Sindhi language, I preferred to attempt them in English. This preference apparently seemed to be my own choice. However, now I can understand the circumstances that led me to have that preference. I remember that, during one final exam, I was writing in the Sindhi language, and when my teacher saw that, she promptly exclaimed, "Inayat, son! You are writing in Sindhi, not in English. If you do so now, then how will you be successful in seeking admission at the Quaid-i-Azam University [an esteemed public university in Islamabad that offers tough competition and good education]." Thereby, she reminded me of the English language's importance for reaching a "high level."

To receive an excellent education that could earn me a job quickly, my friends suggested that I move to Islamabad and study anthropology at Quaid-i-Azam University to obtain a master's degree. And I did, despite the hardship on my family to bear the economic expenses and simultaneously lose an earning hand—as I used to work full-time in the fields of agriculture, poultry, animal husbandry, and, as I previously mentioned, in the date palm industry. To pay the university fee of around $150US, my parents gave me the entire earnings of that date palm season.

In 2005, I started my master's in anthropology at the stated university with high confidence, primarily due to my (supposed) command of English. Yet now, the language changed from Sindhi as a primary mode of communication to Urdu, generating yet another challenge for me. In the first introductory classes, I eagerly started out as an active participant, asking questions or having discussions with teachers. However, I soon realized that neither my Urdu nor my English was up to that university's standards. My non-Sindhi class fellows started laughing at those of us who came from the Sindh, Baluchistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provinces. As it is not one of their mother languages, the people of these provinces neither speak proper Urdu nor have a "typical" accent.

The fact that I used to speak Urdu with a distinct Sindhi accent (called Sindhi Urdu)[1] made matters worse. And when I tried to speak English, other students would laugh at my pronunciation of the words "what" and "vague." Our teacher in Sindh Province taught me to pronounce "what" with an emphatic "t" sound, as we have a similar word in Sindhi, *Wat* (وات), which means "a path" and to pronounce "vague" as "vag-you." For "vague," one of my university teachers asked me to spell it out, and then, when she realized what the word was, she guided me to correctly say "vague."

Due to this and other such incidents, I realized that much of what I had learned back about English in Sindh Province was inaccurate and insufficient. Consequently, I tried to refrain from participating in the class. Although I proved my writing competency, as demonstrated by the fact that, several times, my teachers used my written work as examples to others in the class, my personal confidence was shattered again.

Along with learning anthropology—which was an entirely new discipline for me, as I first heard about it when I was applying for a master's degree—I once again focused on the English language. During my M.Phil. in anthropology, one of my best friends played a pivotal role in improving my English and my Urdu. My Urdu accent did ultimately improve, yet I still had trouble speaking English with an English accent and without a Sindhi/Pakistani accent, though my written expression improved gradually compared to that of my colleagues. Its testimony was my ability to write articles in English that were published in Pakistan's leading English newspapers, such as *Dawn*, which I continue to do but sporadically.

When the time came, I started attempting the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) for pursuing a PhD opportunity. My scores in English were always impressive. Finally, I got my PhD scholarship, which was funded by the Pakistani government. Receiving this scholarship renewed my confidence, as fewer than 1000 people were awarded it out of a population of around 20 billion (in 2013 when I received it). Fortunately, the scholarship enabled me to apply to the Austrian University of Vienna to study for my PhD in anthropology. Yet upon arrival, my assumption that I was good in English was again proven weak. Far too often, people would ask me to repeat what I had said, as they did not understand me. I realized that I now spoke English with a Pakistani accent and needed to work harder to unlearn and relearn for making myself understandable. While my colleagues in my hostel were focusing on learning German, I once again was shifting my attention to improving my English. In 2013, I did make progress in that endeavor as I started listening to lectures on YouTube as well as watching English-language movies. Yet then, in 2014, I went back to Pakistan to conduct my PhD research on measles and vaccination (Ali, 2020). Spending almost one year in the field and communicating in the local languages negatively affected my English. So, upon my return to Vienna, I spent around three months of my summer vacation working hard again to improve my English.

Gradually, I did succeed in improving my English; both in my accent and in my writings. Nonetheless, I still had a long way to go to reach the level of my European colleagues. It was once again a challenge.[2] I was so focused on improving my English that I never became proficient in German. I managed to take only those courses at that university that were offered in English. Over time, I realized that it had been a big mistake not to learn the language of the country I was living in at the time (Austria), as this mistake prevented me from conversing with the natives.

During this time of improving my English, I also completed the first draft of my dissertation. After handing it in, my supervisor rightly proposed that my dissertation, on which I had worked so hard, needed English editing for refinement to enhance the quality of its English language presentation. Considering the entire context of academia and its English dominance, I can now see that his suggestion was correct. Nonetheless, this suggestion negatively affected my confidence about being quite good at my written expression. Following his suggestion, I managed to find a native English editor to edit my dissertation, as there was no other choice available.

This constant requirement to improve one's English yet again reveals its hegemony while producing and perpetuating the inequalities between native and non-native English speakers. The dominance of English as a global language intersects with local and national languages, thereby adversely impacting education, economics, and the cultural identity of a given society (Rassool, 2013). Likewise, its domination as the lingua franca in scholarly publications creates an inherent bias that requires non-native speakers to navigate linguistic nuances, risking misinterpretation. As previously noted, publishing in English often necessitates financial investments for professional editing or translation, which places an additional burden on non-native scholars. The pressure to conform to English language standards potentially marginalizes diverse voices, hindering the full representation of global perspectives in anthropological discourses. This linguistic hegemony illuminates the broader inequities in academia that reinforce the need for a more inclusive approach to restructuring our academic practices—an approach that values contributions regardless of their linguistic origins.

The language one speaks is among the most meaningful resources that an individual can possess, the quality and quantity of which can positively or adversely affect someone's life. As Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1991) noted, a language has both material and symbolic dimensions. By introducing the term "linguistic capital," Bourdieu (ibid.) highlighted language as a form of social capital that heavily influences social mobility and reinforces social and political hierarchies. Beyond communication, language becomes a resource; its symbolic aspects—accents, vocabulary, styles—are crucial in shaping social identity and in positioning individuals within societal structures. Bourdieu's insights extend to "cultural capital," which includes non-financial assets such as education and cultural knowledge that shape social advantages and disadvantages. In light of his work, my odyssey reveals how the English language has become the linguistic and cultural capital since it plays a powerful role in generating social stratification and cultural distinctions within a given society.

As I have previously explained, my lack of proficiency in English had profound impacts on my mental and emotional well-being, particularly evoking feelings of shame and embarrassment. Via understanding the emotional tolls that linguistic challenges can take, one can explore these feelings and affective dimensions for a comprehensive analysis of life-worlds. Understanding the debilitating effects of the lack of English language proficiency on one's psyche is a valuable avenue for anthropological exploration. It not only opens up the academic implications but also the emotional and psychological aspects of language competency. For example, Islam and Stapa (2021) have found that Bangladeshi students struggle with various types of psychological problems while trying to learn English in Bangladesh's private university. These insightful analyses of the challenges and impacts of a language will undoubtedly enrich the depth and nuances of societal processes such as communication, education, and social integration, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of the complexities surrounding the lack of language proficiency and its consequences.

Beyond the hegemony of English, exploring identity differences within Pakistan, e.g., between Sindhi and non-Sindhi communities, is pivotal. Regional identity struggles are intricately linked to the pursuit of English proficiency, with nuanced complexities at play. The question of who defines what constitutes "proper" English unveils power imbalances and highlights how linguistic standards can be wielded as tools of exclusion. Those who are not proficient in English or have an "unacceptable" accent are often excluded from knowledge production and distribution, thereby revealing the differences between "us" and "them." Various stereotypes do prevail around these differences, which can be seen as constituents of the "ethnic boundaries" that demarcate territories, abstractly delineate social groups, and act as templates for mental categorizations (Barth, 2012). Unraveling these local and global dynamics is essential for understanding the multifaceted challenges that individuals face in their efforts to bridge the gap between linguistic struggles and broader identity conflicts. By dissecting these intricate forces, we can cultivate a more inclusive discourse that acknowledges diverse linguistic and regional backgrounds while challenging the existing power structures that dictate linguistic norms.

The stories of learning English for many non-native English speakers, especially those who come from South Asia, are long and full of distress and discouragement. Their lived experiences can demonstrate the relationship between the ability to speak English and an individual's mental health. The English language has long been viewed as the language of pride and knowledge in my country, Pakistan (see below). Additionally, we Pakistanis continue to experience the colonial value that is still placed on this language. Some of us manage to reach the world's reputable educational institutions despite belonging to a low-income family, receiving education in schools that have either no buildings or inadequate ones or that lack proper benches, blackboards, laboratory equipment, and adequate as well as well-trained teachers.

In contrast, I gained a different perspective when I encountered two anthropologists from Europe who have long focused on India and who claimed to be proficient in Hindi/Urdu. When they started communicating with me in Hindi/Urdu, I had to stop them often to ask, "Excuse me, what did you say? Oh, you mean …" When I did that to one of them—who, at the time, was standing with his students during a conference—it caused him humiliation in front of his students. In response, I reassured him not to be worried, noting, "It is the same when we speak English in front of you, who are the native English speakers." Neither of these well-established scholars appearingly faces any issues whether they speak good or bad Hindi/Urdu. I am sure that their confidence was not shattered.

In contrast, non-native English speakers experience how a lack of proficiency in English can affect their confidence and progress, especially professionally. In my case, as previously mentioned, my struggles with English have continually affected my confidence and impeded my progress. I am told that my vocabulary is excellent but that my sentence construction still needs an improvement. Even this present article had to be proofread by a native English-speaking colleague. At one point, I realized that perhaps it would be better to write in the languages I know best: Seraiki, Sindhi, and Urdu—in all of which I do not need someone to edit my work. And there the problems arise. Would my work be considered for publication in any relevant prestigious international journals? Is it possible to write in one's own language and then be cited? Are there any journals that would publish my work both in my language and in English, providing translation for free? All non-native English speakers are heavily challenged in the academic world. Their work may be brilliant, but it will not be well-known if it is not published in English—which, in many countries, is the language of the colonizers.

Conclusions: The possibility of plurilogies

The 1980s "crisis of representation" in anthropology encouraged autoethnography because it acknowledged the impossibility of complete objectivity in ethnographic research (Ali, 2022, Campbell, 2016). Now, researchers recognize subjective self-experiences as first-hand data that contribute to nuanced understandings of sociocultural processes. Autoethnography, which emphasizes emotions and self-reflexivity, rejects the positivist notions of reliability and validity and offers a unique perspective on the "self" and its connections to society in social science debates. Owing to the different turns and twists in ethnographic research, some have called autoethnography a "crisis in anthropology" (Clifford, 1986). Yet autoethnographies can be seen as forms of plurilogies that encourage the development of unique perspectives that generate different ways of doing anthropology.

Following these lines in this autoethnographic account, I have briefly presented my case story of trying my best to learn English and the various challenges that I faced while I was on my way during that journey. Although non-English publications hold great importance in knowledge production, I must repeat that English is the dominant language of the vast majority of academic and other types of publications (Liu, 2017). As I have shown throughout this article, this language has emerged as a significant obstacle for those writers who come from countries where English is not the native language (Hyland, 2015). In some countries, the need to publish in the English language has emerged more recently as compared to other regions, such as Kazakhstan and Colombia, which is causing intense pressure on the authors (Curry and Lillis, 2013, 2017).

Writing is not just a collection of letters on paper or on other materials; it goes beyond being a simple inscription to reveal different forms and levels of politics within specific contexts. Writings become symbols that are pregnant with different meanings, signifying that each word, phrase, or text carries layers of significance beyond its literal interpretation. These meanings are shaped by the particular circumstances in which the writings are produced and received, including historical, cultural, and social factors.

While exploring the intricate relationships between academic writings and global geopolitics, Canagarajah (2002) illustrated the power dynamics that are inherent in scholarly communications, and demonstrated how cultural, political, and linguistic factors influence the production and dissemination of academic knowledge.

Using English as the *de facto* global language in science and in the social sciences holds potential drawbacks, such as excluding non-English speakers and imposing cultural biases (Montgomery, 2013). My brief autoethnographic account has shown how this barrier further increases its strength for those who receive their education from insufficiently funded and low-resourced educational institutions. The explorations described above are intended to prompt nuanced reflections on the evolving dynamics of language in science and its implications for fostering a more inclusive and equitable scientific community. Those working in the scientific arena should consider alternative approaches that balance the practical benefits of a common scientific language with the imperative of embracing linguistic and cultural diversity for a richer, more comprehensive advancement of knowledge on a global scale.

Given that anthropologists have started discussing how to "decolonize anthropology," I propose a few critical questions to invite my fellows to think and reflect upon. I ask, is it possible and practical to decolonize anthropology—an endeavor that would entail letting go of English as its dominant language? Will it be possible to allow non-native English speakers to organize panels and present their work in their mother tongues at leading anthropological platforms such as the American Anthropological Association (AAA) or the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) to arrange free-of-charge simultaneous translations of these talks in English or in other languages?

Although a few lesser-known journals have started the translation process, can the well-established and reputable journals of anthropology afford to publish articles in native languages? Can the reputable educational institutions of the Global North afford to allow anthropologists like me to produce our dissertations in our mother tongues? And if everyone writes in their mother tongue, can anthropology afford the economic resources needed to translate these works into English so that we can communicate with each other and, most notably, understand each other?

The decolonizing that I am suggesting herein would go beyond conventional boundaries, prompting critical reflections on anthropology's position in knowledge production and fostering a reciprocal dialog, particularly through the perspectives of "Indigenous" anthropologists who are navigating contradictory roles within the Western academy and are attempting to restructure anthropology (Allen and Jobson, 2016; Harrison, 2011; Loperena et al., 2020). Yet these tasks will be far from easy.

In light of the persistent marginalization of Indigenous voices, which are often relegated to the periphery and are unfairly dismissed as "subjective" or "emotive," the imperative of decolonization extends beyond mere discourse reform. It highlights a profound reconfiguration of the socio-cultural landscape, entailing a reconceptualization of not only the narratives we construct but also of the composition of the intellectual and artistic "buildings" where knowledge production and creative endeavors unfold (Todd, 2015, p. 251). Decolonization requires a reimagining of the very structures that shape our collective understanding and appreciation of Indigenous perspectives.

I reiterate my questions: Is it possible and practical to decolonize anthropology, and to what extent can anthropology afford it? Or, in the words of Jobson (2020, p. 261), can we "let anthropology burn?" and promote plurilogies within and outside of our discipline? Scholars like Ribeiro and Escobar (2020, p. 3) have foreseen that possibility but through "the shattering of this single space and the creation of a multiplicity from which diverse anthropologies may emerge."

On one hand, the international platforms of anthropology need to lay the groundwork for the building of an infrastructure that supports many anthropologies. On the other hand, anthropologists coming from subaltern backgrounds require promoting anthropological knowledge production in their local languages. In Pakistan, although local languages are used to explain "complex" anthropological concepts, English remains the main medium of instruction, for example, for delivering lectures and conducting assessments. Similarly, in locally arranged intellectual events such as symposiums or conferences, English is still preferred for giving talks. And there are no local language-based "reputable" journals. Of course, it is necessary and possible to reimagine and restructure anthropological knowledge inculcation and production, yet, most unfortunately for non-native English language speakers, these remain deeply situated within the hegemony of the English language.

Data availability

All data are part of this article.

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Notes

1 The Sindhi part of my accent in Urdu came from the Sindhi language, which has strong sounds and allows no other language to dominate it. It is believed that Sindhi is a "strong" and rich language with more than 52 sounds, and some of them are not found in other languages, such as "dd" "ڏ", "NGN" "ڱ".

2 I remember that we had a discussion in which I, along with a colleague from Turkey, suggested that more courses should be offered in English and that this language should be a more primary medium of communication in the university than German. And then a German colleague made fun of us, saying that the primary university language should be Urdu! She was right in her stance because it was my/our fault that we were non-proficient in German.

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Author contributions

IA conceptualized, extracted the information, drafted, reviewed, critically read, revised and analyzed, validated the paper.

Competing interests

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest. The author was a member of the Editorial Board of this journal at the time of acceptance for publication. The manuscript was assessed in line with the journal's standard editorial processes, including its policy on competing interests.

Ethical approval

Since this is an autoethnographic account, no approval was required.

Informed consent

Since this is an autoethnographic account, no informed consent was required.

Additional information

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