
English Language Dominance and Native Language Sustainability: A Quantitative Analysis of Sindhi Speakers' Perceptions

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Abstract

The English language dominance in the world has altered the linguistic landscape of the multilingual societies, and this is a subject of concern regarding the sustainability of the regional and native languages. This paper quantitatively analyses the perception of the Sindhi speakers regarding English language dominance and how it affects the survival of Sindhi language. The survey method was used, and 65 undergraduate students in four departments, namely English, Education, Business, and Economics were surveyed at Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazirabad. The questionnaire was designed using 15 close-ended items whose measures were on the five-point Likert scale between Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree. The descriptive and inferential statistics were performed to evaluate the perception of the participants and to analyze the associations between the dominance of the English language and the native language sustainability. The results have shown that the dominance of English, although viewed as a prerequisite to academic achievement, career development, and communication in the international context, has influence on the usage, transmission, and the value attached to the Sindhi language. The participants also re-emphasized the relevance of mother-tongue learning in order to learn and preserve the language. These findings indicate that English serves as both an opportunity and a potential threat to the regional languages and therefore there is need to have educational and policy measures that would help in ensuring the maintenance of the native language and at the same time English proficiency.

Keywords: Dominance of English Language, the Preservation of Native Language, Sindhi Language, Attitudes to Language, Mother-Tongue Education.

Introduction

The popularization of the English language globally has greatly influenced the changing of linguistic spaces in the multilingual societies. Due to the growing role of the English language as a language of education, governance, technology and social economic mobility, the growing spheres of control that the English language has come to dominate has sparked concern over the health of indigenous and localized languages. It has been postulated by scholars that although the English language gives people access to global market opportunities, its imbalanced prominence can be seen as causing marginalization and eventual loss of native language especially in postcolonial world (Phillipson, 1992; Crystal, 2003). Therefore, the perception of English language dominance by the local communities has emerged as one of the most critical concerns to be explored in the field of sociolinguistics and language policy research. Language sustainability can be defined as the use, transmission, and social relevance of a language through generations. As the dominant language becomes prestigious and supported by the government, speakers of the minor or regional languages might start to think of the native language as crippled in the realms of

formal, educational or professional activities (Fishman, 1991). Such perceptions tend to impact on language attitudes, language use and language transfer across generations which eventually impacts on the survival of the mother tongue. Thus, the perception of the speakers is important in determining the risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of the language. English holds a dominant role in Pakistan as an inheritance of the colonial rule and a modern indicator of education, social status and economic progress. Despite the fact that the Urdu is the national language, English is still predominant in higher education, official communications and elite institutions (Rahman, 2002). Such linguistic hierarchy has fostered unequal power relations among languages with the regional languages like Sindh being relatively vulnerable. Although Sindhi have had a strong literary tradition and historical relevance, it is becoming more and more threatened by English in both official and urban spheres and the question arises as to whether it will continue to be used and be of relevance to younger generations. Past studies on language attitudes in Pakistan have tended to emphasize on the ideological position of English, language policy and bilingual education and have been mostly in nature, based on qualitative or mixed-method research design (Mansoor, 2004; Shamim, 2011). Although such studies are very insightful, there is a relative dearth of quantitative studies which measure the perceptions of English language dominance by a given set of speakers in a systematic way and which determine how the same has affected the sustainability of the languages in the region like Sindhi. Quantitative analysis enables detection of patterns, relationships and statistically significant tendencies that can be used in the evidence-based language planning and policy formation.

The perceptions are instrumental in language behavior. When speakers assume that English is the language of success and Sindhi is the language of informal or household life, these attitudes can be one of the factors that prompts language shift, even in the most language-suppressive scenarios (Baker, 1992). Quantitative measurement of these perceptions would allow the researcher to determine how much English dominance is linked to the fears of language loss, use and transmission. In addition, it is possible to analyze such demographic characteristics as age, education level and residential background to gain a better understanding of the way in which perceptions differ depending on social groups. It is against this background that the current study will seek to quantitatively determine how Sindhi speakers perceive the English language dominance and its effect on the sustainability of Sindhi language. This study aims to provide empirical findings to the existing debates on the topic of language dominance, attitudes, and sustainability in multilingual societies by utilizing a survey-based methodology. It is assumed that the findings will provide useful implications in language policy, education planning and the policies that work to preserve the linguistic diversity in Pakistan.

Research objectives

1. To measure Sindhi speakers' perceptions regarding the dominance of the English language in educational, social, and professional domains.
2. To assess perceived effects of English language dominance on the use, status, and transmission of the Sindhi language.

Research Questions

1. What are Sindhi speakers' perceptions of the impact of English language dominance on the sustainability of the Sindhi language?
2. How do Sindhi speakers perceive the dominance of the English language across different social domains?

Literature Review

Domination of the English language in an international setting

The prevalence of the English language has been highly reported to be one of the characteristics of globalization and postcolonial linguistic dominions. The English language is used as *lingua franca* in science, technology, education and international communication, which gives the speakers of this language symbolic and material benefits (Crystal, 2003). Nevertheless, researchers believe that the globalization of the English language is not a non-partisan event; it is instead inherent in historical, political as well as financial power formation that tends to sideline the local as well as native languages (Phillipson, 1992). This superiority leads to the question of lingo disparity and the sustainability of non-dominant languages in the long term perspective. Studies indicate that institutional preferences given to the English language can result in the acquisition of an instrumental attitude by other languages towards the language, which can view it as a prerequisite to social mobility and success (Graddol, 2006). Such perceptions indirectly may affect the language options in education, career, and even the linguistic life of a family, and thus transform linguistic practices on a community level. The analysis of the visions of the dominance of the English language is, therefore, a beneficial study of the reflection of the global linguistic trends on the local scale.

Native Language Maintenance and Language Sustainability

Language sustainability is the capacity of a language to ensure an active, functional relevance, inter-generational continuity, and social cultural significance with time (Fishman, 1991). A language is at risk when people subject it to less formal contexts or even feel that it is not economically viable. These are some of the perceptions that lead to language shift even before there is any measureable deterioration of language use (Grenoble and Whaley, 2006).

Attitudes, Perceptions, and Quantitative Measurement of language

The attitudes and perceptions of language are core in behavior socio linguistic. Attitudes are beliefs, sentiments and judgment that speakers have towards languages and their speakers (Garrett, 2010). The sense of language dominance tends to have an impact on the choice of educational paths, the choice of occupation, and the tendencies of bilingualism. Quantitative research usually quantify these perceptions using Likert-scale questionnaires that enable the researcher to quantify the strength and frequency of attitudes in people (Baker, 1992). A number of studies have exhibited statistically significant levels of association among perceptions of dominant languages and attitudes towards native languages. As an illustration, studies conducted in multilingual communities have established that the relative prestige of English is positively related to the relative undermining of the local languages (Tollefson, 2013). Such correlations can be best identified with the help of quantitative methods and by looking at the mediation of perceptions of languages on the basis of demographic factors.

Dominance of English language in Pakistan

English plays an exceptionally dominant role in Pakistan in the aftermath of colonialism and because of its continuing use in administration, post-secondary education, and upper-class spheres. As much as Urdu is the national language, English is commonly considered as a symbol of intelligence, professionalism and career advancement (Rahman, 2002). Empirical research has indicated in Pakistan that English language is usually equated with modernity and prosperity, whereas regional languages are viewed as significant but constrained economically (Mansoor, 2004). These types of perceptions have been empirically attributed to language choices in education and professional communication (Shamim, 2011).

The Sindhi Language and Dominance and Sustainability

The Sindhi language is among the major regional languages in Pakistan, it has a long history of literature and has a strong cultural identity. Although the Sindh language is given official status at the provincial level, Sindhi is under growing pressure especially in the cities and in institutions of learning. It has been found that younger Sindhi speakers tend to correlate English with academic and professional achievement and Sindhi with the culture and household sphere (Ali, 2015). The literature that has already been done on Sindhi language attitudes has been mostly qualitative or mixed based and has addressed the aspect of identity, language pride and cultural preservation. Although these studies do have valuable information, they tend to be insufficient in terms of large-scale quantitative data that could allow drawing patterns and relationships between the dominance of the English language and the perceptions of the Sindhi language sustainability. Quantitative focus enables the systematic measurement of the perceptions and enables statistical examination of how dominance in English can affect the issues regarding the language maintenance.

Research Gap and Impact of the Current Research

The analyzed literature reveals that there is a significant gap in quantitative studies, which are based on research on the perception of Sindhi speakers about the dominance of the English language and the maintenance of the native language. Although theoretical and qualitative literature recognizes the pressure that the English language is putting on the speakers of Sindhi, minimal empirical data is available to assess the extent to which Sindhi speakers feel the pressure and how this can be correlated with the issue of language sustainability. This gap is addressed in the given study by utilizing a quantitative survey-based approach to study the perceptions of Sindhi speakers. This study may help to add empirical evidence to sociolinguistic discussions in language dominance, attitudes and maintenance in multilingual societies by statistically testing the relationship between perceived English language dominance and perceptions of Sindhi language sustainability. Also, the presence of demographic variables adds more insights to the perception variation among social groups, which may be applied to language policy and educational planning.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design used in this study was a quantitative research design that aimed at testing the perceptions of the Sindhi speakers regarding the dominance of the English language and its effects on the sustainability of the Sindhi language. To carry out the study, a survey-based methodology was used since it enables the systematic quantification of attitudes and perceptions and it is easy to statistically analyse the relationship between variables. The quantitative design was thought to be suitable in accomplishing the objectives of the study which are to measure the perceptions and discern patterns of the study within a given population.

Participants

The sample population was a sample of 65 undergraduate students pursuing four academic departments English, Education, Business Administration, and Economics in Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazirabad. The convenience sampling method was applied in the selection of the participants because of their availability and willingness to participate. The study was restricted to Sindh native speakers so that the relevant subjects would be covered. The decision to include students representing various academic fields was aimed at representing a diversity of more or less views on the issue of the dominance of the English language and the preservation of the native language.

Research Instrument

The data were gathered by a self-administered structured questionnaire with 15 close ended questions. The questionnaire was such that it was to measure the perceptions of the participants on English language dominance and its perceived influence on the sustainability of Sindhi language. Each element was made like statements where the respondents had to answer according to a five points Likert scale between Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree to Strongly Disagree. Close-ended questions allowed quantifying the responses and contributed to the creation of a statistical analysis. The questions in questionnaires were formulated according to the appropriate literature on the dominance of different languages, attitude towards languages and the sustainability of languages. Simple and direct language was used to formulate the items to help the participants answer without any form of ambiguity.

Data Collection Procedure

The survey was conducted among the participants when they had time to clear their academic tasks with the prior consent of the respective departments. The participants were explained the aim of the study and guaranteed them that their answers would be anonymous and would only be used in the context of academic studies. The process was voluntary, and the respondents were allowed enough time to fill in the questionnaire. All the Questionnaires were gathered back at once to have high response rate.

Data Analysis

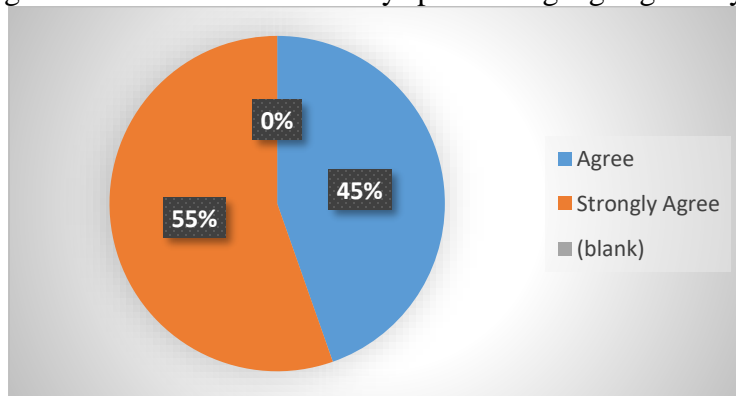
The descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the collected data. The Likert-scale items responses were coded numerically so as to be analyzed. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to provide a summary of the perceptions of the participants with regards to the dominance of English language and the maintenance of Sindhi language. Inferential analysis was done to assess the relationship between perceived English language dominance and perceptions of the sustainability of native language. Demographic variables like departmental affiliation were also taken into consideration where necessary to determine the differences in perceptions among the academic disciplines. The statistical analysis was conducted with the use of a proper statistical software.

Ethical Considerations

During the research, ethical consideration was being followed. The participants were told the aims of the study and the fact that they could withdraw at any point. There was no gathering of personal identifying information and it was therefore confidential and anonymous. Ethical standards in academic research were followed in the study.

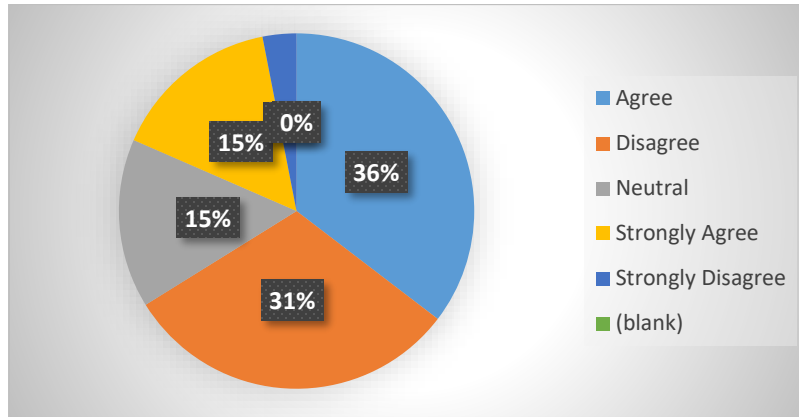
Analysis of questionnaire

1. English is one of the most widely spoken languages globally.



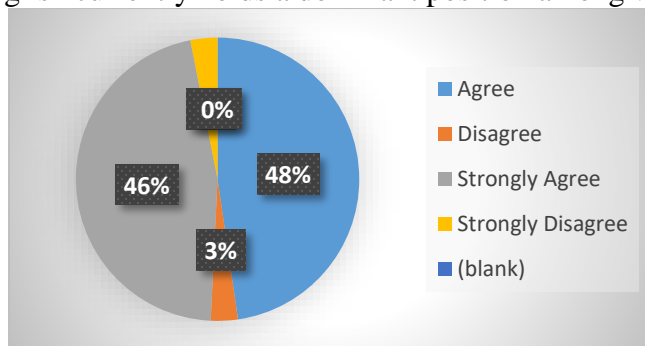
If we see in this research item no one from the selected respondent have disagreed all the respondents have agreed with the item that English is the most widely spoken language of the world.

2. The global spread of the English language has contributed significantly to processes of globalization.



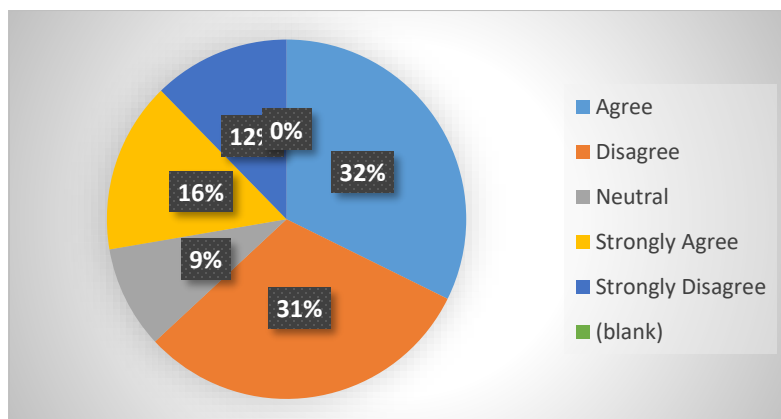
In 2nd item majority of participants were agreeing to the global spread of English language has contributed to process of globalization,

3. English currently holds a dominant position among world languages.



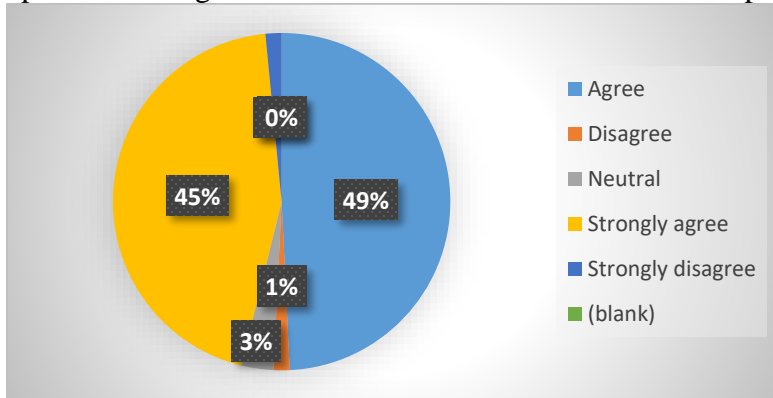
In the 3rd item participants in majority were agreed that English holds a dominant position among world languages.

4. Proficiency in the English language increases opportunities for employment.



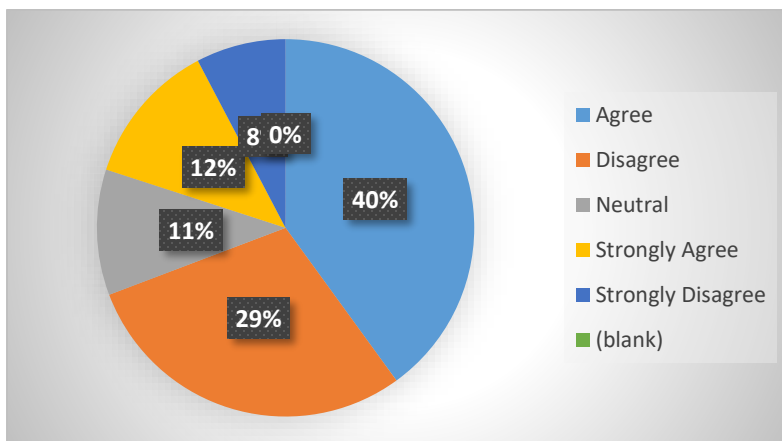
Majority of respondents were in view that English language proficiency is required for getting employment opportunities.

5. Competence in English is essential for academic success and professional advancement.



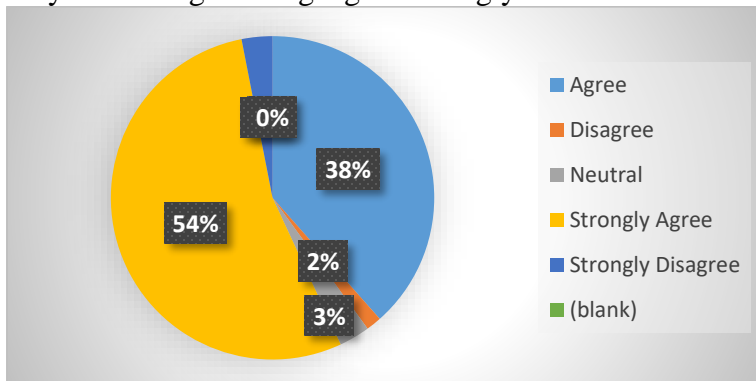
In the 5th research item participants were asked for Competence in English is essential for academic success and professional advancement, majority of participant were agreed to this viewpoint.

6. English is perceived as a crucial language for learning academic subjects.



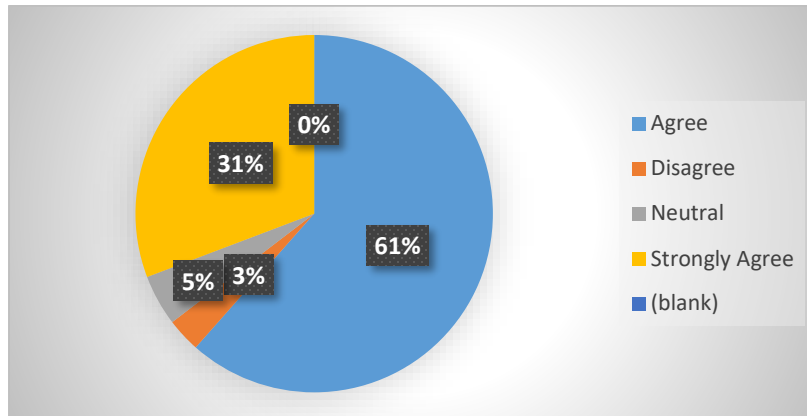
In the 6th research item participants were asked for “*English is perceived as a crucial language for learning academic subjects.*” from their responses we can see that majority of students were agreed to it.

7. Mastery of the English language is strongly associated with better career prospects.



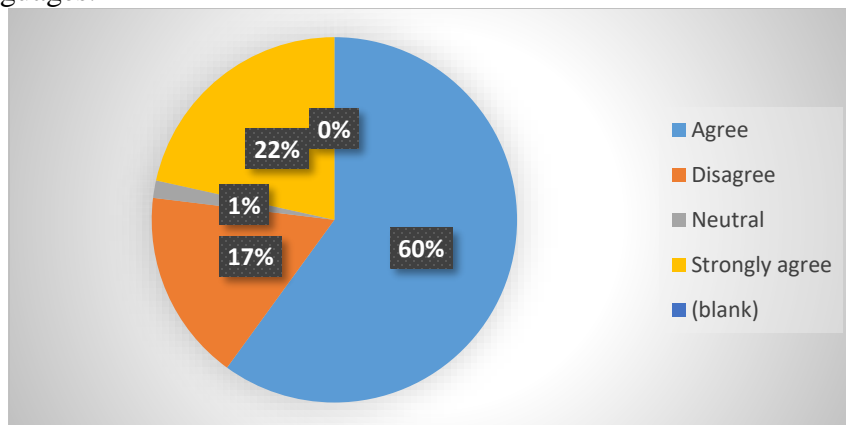
When participants were asked about the English language mastery for better career opportunities, majority of students were strongly agree to this viewpoint.

8. The increasing dominance of English poses a threat to the sustainability of other languages.



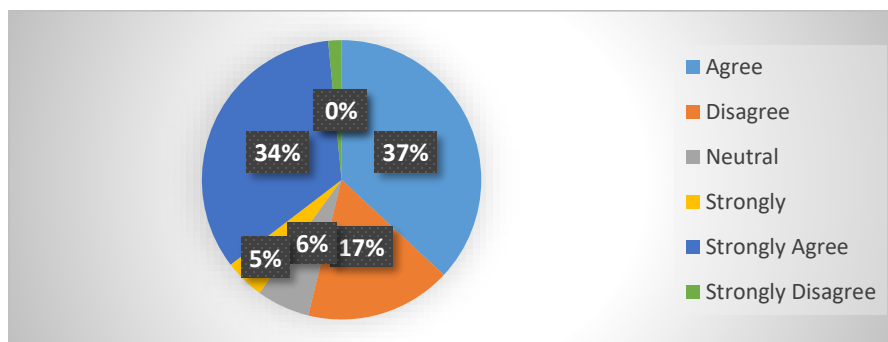
Almost all the participants were agreed that dominance of English poses a threat to the sustainability of other languages.

9. The global expansion of English contributes to the decline of many indigenous and regional languages.



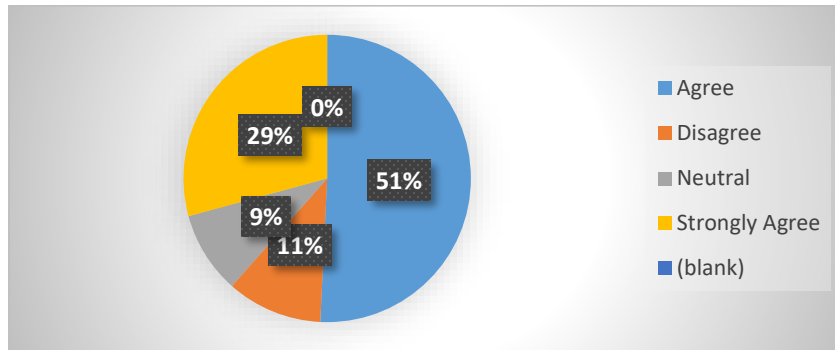
Again when respondents were asked about the global expansion of English contributes to the decline of many indigenous and regional languages, majority of them were agreed to this item.

10. The widespread use of English has negatively affected the status of the Sindhi language.



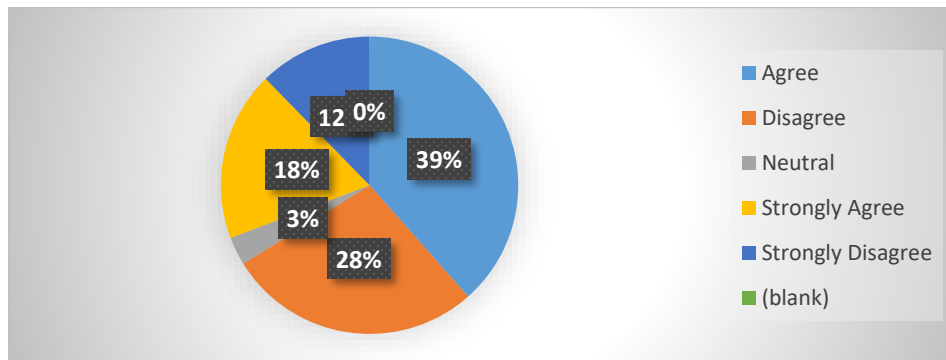
In this item, majority of students were agreed that the widespread use of English has negatively affected the status of the Sindhi language.

11. In Sindh, increased use of English has led to reduced use of the Sindhi language among speakers.



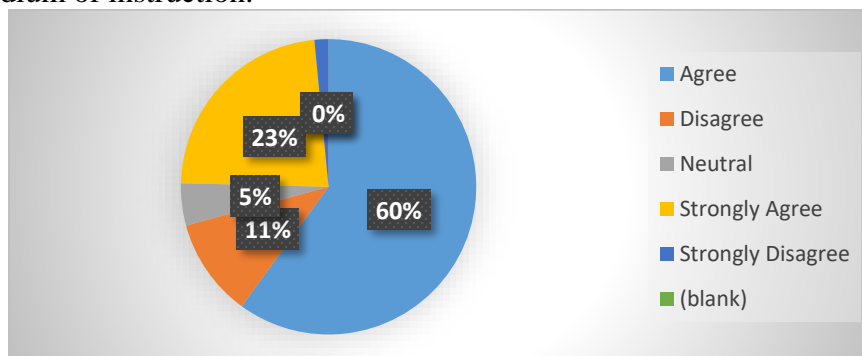
When participants were asked that increased use of English has led to reduced use of the Sindhi language among speakers, majority of students agreed to this statement.

12. The use of English in academic and professional settings has negatively influenced the use of Sindhi as a native language.



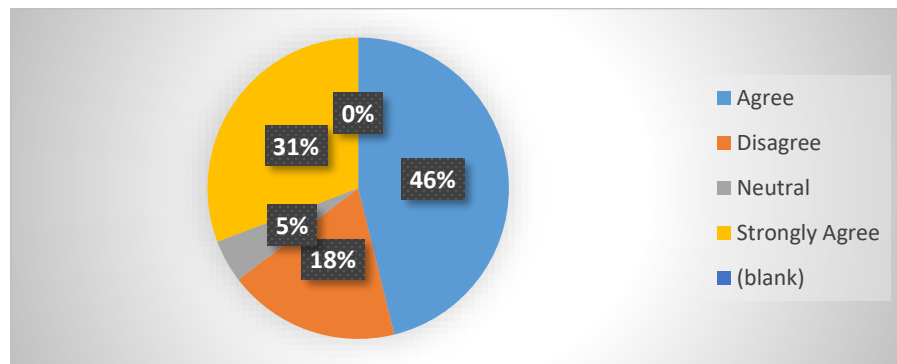
In this research item participants were asked for the use of English in academic and professional settings has negatively influenced the use of Sindhi as a native language so the majority of students agreed that English has negative influence over native language, while only few students responded that it has no negative influence over Sindhi as a native language.

13. Teaching and learning in the mother tongue is more effective than using English as the medium of instruction.



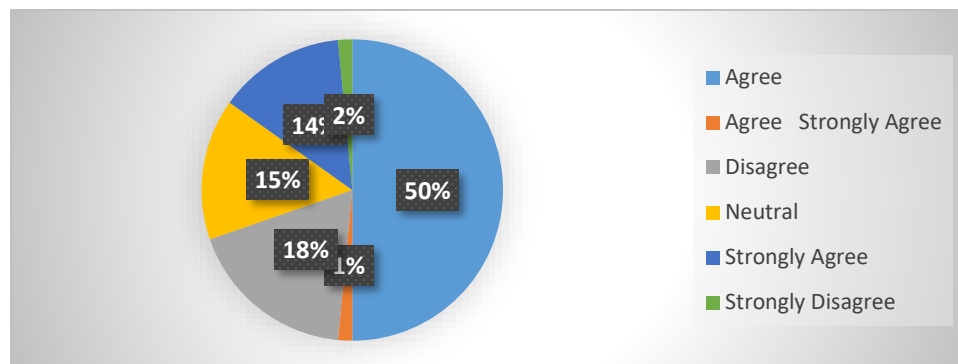
Here participants were asked about the medium of instruction for teaching-learning process, majority of them were agreed that mother tongue is more effective than English language as a medium of instruction.

14. The medium of instruction in classrooms should be the learners' mother tongue.



Again when students were asked about medium of instruction in the classroom should be learners' mother tongue, majority of them were agree and strongly agree to this item.

15. English is often prioritized over the mother tongue in educational and professional contexts.



In the 15th research item participants were asked for "English is often prioritized over the mother tongue in educational and professional contexts." from their responses we can see that majority of participants were agreed to this item.

Discussion

The results of the current research are empirical evidence on how Sindhi speakers view the dominance of the English language and its effects on the sustainability of the Sindhi language, as the research objectives and questions of the research were addressed. The comparison of the answers of 65 respondents in the English, Education, Business, and Economics departments of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazirabad, shows that there are a number of prominent trends. To begin with, respondents unanimously identified English as a world language, one of the most spoken languages in the world. This impression is consistent with the larger concept relating to English as a prevailing language on the international education, communication, and professional spheres (Crystal, 2003; Phillipson, 1992). The majority of the participants concurred that academic achievement and professional growth require one to know English; they affirmed the questions "Competence in English is essential to academic success and

professional growth" and "Mastery of the English language is closely related to improved career opportunities." The result shows that there is a great instrumental attitude towards English, which is perceived to be useful in getting a job and position in life, which supports the earlier study on the language attitude in Pakistan (Rahman, 2002; Mansoor, 2004).

Secondly, the research sheds light on the consciousness of the participants about the negative influence of the use of English on the Sindhi language through the item of the study that states that English has a negative effect on the status of the Sindhi language (the use of English has resulted in less use of the Sindhi language by the speakers). The respondents responded by agreeing that the prevalence of English has affected the use of Sindhi not only in school but also in the workplace. This conclusion directly answers the research question of the perceived impacts of the English language dominance on the sustainability of Sindhi language. It shows that the priority of English over Sindhi has concrete consequences to preservation and transmission of the native language and it is something that promotes the argument by Fishman (1991), that the attitudes towards language are very influential in language vitality. In addition, the statistics show that the participants indicate mother-tongue instruction preference. The answers on questions like: Teaching and learning in the native language is more effective than learning in English as the medium of instruction and: The medium of instruction in classrooms should be the native language of learners will show that a significant percentage of students speaking Sindhi think that the results of learning will be better in case the native-language instruction is the priority. It is an indication of the awareness of the participants to the pedagogical and cognitive benefits of learning in their native tongue, which implies that the prominence of the English language can be an unintentional obstacle in maintaining language competence and understanding the concepts at school. The research also shows that the participants do not overlook the larger implications of enjoying English dominance can cause since they are in agreement with the statement "The growing dominance of English is a threat to the sustainability of other languages. This observation is in line with what other people have said about linguistic imperialism and the proliferation of English globally which reveals the threat that would be posed to local and minority languages all over the world (Phillipson, 1992; Graddol, 2006). Lastly, the findings indicate that the perceptions of the participants differ depending on the educational setting since students in various departments raised the same issues concerning the encouragement of English as the primary language at the expense of Sindhi. This highlights the fact that the perception regarding the presence of English as a language, though instrumental in terms of socioeconomic development, puts strain on the use of native languages, which supports the purpose of the study, which is to explore the relationship between English dominance and the sustainability of native languages. In brief, the quantitative results of this research state that the speakers of Sindhi language understand that the English language is a strong global language, but they also understand that it is a threat to the survival of their native language. The findings indicate that educational and occupational pressure is a contributing factor to the preference of English over Sindhi and that the participants place importance on mother tongue teaching in order to gain better understanding and language maintenance. Such results are in line with the objectives and research questions of the study and provide both statistical and empirical evidence of the argument that the dominance of the English language impacts perceptions, attitudes, and possible changes in the native language among the Sindhi speakers.

Conclusion

This paper had conducted a quantitative study of the extent of how Sindhi speakers perceive the idea of English language hegemony and its effects on the viability of the Sindhi language. The results indicate that the participants understand that English is one of the dominant and influential languages in the world and is necessary to achieve academic performance, career growth, and

socioeconomic mobility. Simultaneously, the participants feel that the popularity of the English language has a detrimental effect on the Sindhi language and its application at the academic, workplace, and social levels. The findings also indicate that mother-tongue teaching is appreciated by Sindhi-speaking students, and they believe that it is essential to learn effectively and to preserve the topicality of their native language and its continuity. This implies that as much as English has important practical advantages, its overwhelming power can play a role in the progressive marginalization of the regional languages unless it is balanced with policies and practices that can help keep the native tongue alive. In general, the paper indicates that English is a double-edged sword as it can be linked to both opportunity and a threat to linguistic diversity. This research can be used in the current debate on language attitudes, language planning, and educational policy in multilingual societies by offering empirical data in the form of a quantitative survey. The findings reiterate the importance of the programs, which could help to facilitate the preservation of native languages, as well as English proficiency so that local languages such as Sindhi could remain vibrant with the rest of the world languages. Future studies can extend this study into bigger and more heterogeneous samples, more demographic factors, and longitudinal transformation of language perceptions and use. Such studies would also be used in evidence-based language policies that would help to maintain linguistic diversity, but at the same time, take into consideration the pragmatic benefits of English language proficiency.

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