

The present research was conducted to examine the socio-cultural dimension of English language teaching in Pakistan in terms of identity construction of learners, the possibility of a language shift and social segregation in society. The position of English is compounded within its historical background, its global importance and Pakistani society's perceptions regarding its value. State policies of language and education have implicated English in power structures which have led to the emergence of private elite institutions. These institutions reflect the dual relationship between English and Pakistani society: on the one hand they are based on society's assumptions regarding English and on the other they help to establish these assumptions on the socio-cultural level. Societal attitudes regard teaching and learning of English as highly desirable based on its power to confer economic and social rewards and as the only means to access higher education. Private English medium schools fulfill the elite demand for quality English medium education but exclude the majority because of the expenses involved. This has created a situation of inequality, which impacts not only educational opportunities but also distribution of economic rewards which depend on literacy in English. These institutions contribute to elitist domains of power which has resulted in a very limited vertical, social and economic mobility.

The research findings indicate that English language teaching has become a major cause of estrangement between various social strata. Teaching of English in Pakistan is traditionally supplemented with English literary texts which are usually culturally and ideologically loaded. Combined with center-based curriculums and pedagogies, the texts' message could influence learners' identity and subjectivity. Learners could be influenced by the world views impounded in them and combined with the westernized environment and the emphasis on English as the only language within the school, these features could collude to implement a hidden curriculum of acculturation. The hybrid identities which would emerge would be a western-oriented youth, who would be empathetic with western cultural norms and would hold their own languages and cultures in low esteem.

The present study attempts to bring awareness about the present ELT practices in the elite schools. It is grounded in theories of language policy and planning, structuralism, postmodernism and deconstruction. Being a sociolinguistic inquiry, it draws on quantitative and qualitative data from stake holders in education and analyses it against documentary evidence. Based on research findings which indicate linguistic assimilation and a language shift towards English, the recommendations include changes in policies related to English pedagogies, teacher training and the regularization of private schools.