



Plurilingual Practices in Multilingual Balochistan: Extent, Attitudes, and the Competence–Deficiency Debate

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the plurilingual practices of multilingual university students in Balochistan, Pakistan – one of the most linguistically diverse and under-researched provinces in South Asia. The study adopts a sequential mixed-methods design to investigate three research questions on the extent of plurilingual practices, speakers' attitudes towards these practices and whether plurilingualism is a communicative competence or a linguistic deficiency. The study involves a Likert-scale questionnaire (n = 100) and recorded oral conversations at two public universities in Quetta. The outcomes confirmed the pervasiveness and functional motivation of plurilingual practices as the non-English or non-Urdu words accounted for 40–77% of the total words produced across the five activities recorded. Attitudinal data reveal a general positive attitude towards plurilingualism but one that is also modulated by residual negative perceptions related to monolingual ideologies and identity anxiety. Qualitative thematic analysis of the activity transcripts yielded seven functional categories underpinning plurilingual behaviour: absence of adequate vocabulary, societal and religious customs, habitual usage and convenience, incorporation of morphological forms, gap filling, taboo avoidance and humour. The results show that the plurilingualism of Balochistan is not a deficit but an observable communicative competence, following Canagarajah's (2009) integrated competence model and the Council of Europe's (2001) plurilingual approach, and one systematically overlooked by monolingual education policies.



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Introduction

Balochistan, the largest province of Pakistan by the virtue of area, has one of the most intricate and least explored sociolinguistic profiles in South Asia. The region is surrounded by Afghanistan, Iran and three other Pakistani provinces, and has traditionally been a place of ethnic contact between Baloch, Brahvi, Pashtoon, Hazara, Punjabi, Seraiki and Sindhi communities, each of which introduces its own language and cultural heritage into daily interaction (Jahani et al., 2008; Archer, 2009; Khosa, 2025). The provincial capital, Quetta, is a microcosm of this multilingual reality. Urdu is the lingua franca, Pashto and Balochi are the majority ethnic

languages in their respective communities, and English is the principal language of instruction in higher education. Lately, Brahvi language also has emerged as the most spoken language in the region as Brahvis claim to be ethnically attached to the Baloch (Khosha, 2026). This leads to a communicative environment where speakers often draw on more than one linguistic system in one utterance, a practice that this study will study through theoretical framework of plurilingualism.

The Council of Europe (2001) and Canagarajah (2007, 2009) have conceptualised plurilingualism differently from multilingualism. Where multilingualism refers to the co-existence of separate language competencies – a model based on in which each language is treated as a unique and constrained system – plurilingualism refers to a unified communication practice in which individuals draw specifically and flexibly upon their entire repertoire of languages despite their level of competence in any individual language. This isn't simply a question of semantics. This has important ramifications for the evaluation of language use: a plurilingual speaker who shifts between Urdu, Pashto and Balochi during a single turn does not demonstrate incompetence, but performs an advanced, socially situated discourse strategy.

Theoretically, this is relevant to South Asian linguistic contexts, but empirical evidence on the concept in Balochistan is essentially inadequate. A place of particular analytical interest is the province's multilingual character, the fact that it is one of the most politically contentious areas of Pakistan and the tension between the monolingual notions promoted through its schools and the multilingual realities of everyday communication. The current research attempts to address this shortcoming by exploring the extent and functional motivating factors of plurilingual practices among pupils at two public universities in Quetta.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Literature review gives an overview of the theoretical and empirical literature on bilingualism, multilingualism, code-switching, and plurilingualism. Followed by the research design and instruments. Next is the presentation of the quantitative and qualitative findings. The finding section states results in relation to the three research questions and to the existing literature. Lastly, the conclusion with implications and recommendations are presented.

Literature Review

From Bilingualism and Multilingualism to Plurilingualism

Scholarly understanding of language contact has evolved significantly over the past century, from a deficit-oriented model of bilingualism to an integrated, competence-based model of plurilingualism. Early definitions of bilingualism were based on proficiency. Bloomfield's (1933) classical formulation specified native-like mastery of two languages, while Lado (1964) expanded the definition to include any level of competence in a second language. Mackey (1962) described bilingualism as the alternating practice of languages, a description that is starting to move towards the more fluid concept that characterises contemporary plurilingualism research.

Multilingualism, defined as the ability to speak two or more languages, was theorised as a social and individual phenomenon by researchers such as Fishman (1972), Ferguson (1959), Gumperz (1971) and Hymes (1974), all of whom emphasised the relation between language use and social function. Grosjean (1982) reckoned that half the entire population of the world is bi- or

multilingual. Such estimates indicate the widespread existence of language contact in the world, but the theoretical models of both bilingualism and multilingualism continue to view constituent languages as separate systems, which is the major assumption that plurilingualism calls into question.

Code-switching, a most studied form of multilingual behaviour, has been theorised as the interplay of two grammatical systems (Gumperz, 1982), the switching between languages at phrase, word or sentence level (Ayeomoni, 2006; Bokamba, 1989), and a socially motivated choice controlled by speakers' awareness of contextual norms (Myers-Scotton, 1993). Research has demonstrated that switching codes is not a marker of linguistic incompetence but a sophisticated rhetorical practice (Romaine, 1989). Code-switching, however, presupposes bilingual competence and treats languages as identifiable, separable systems – a presupposition that plurilingualism does not share.

Plurilingualism, as framed by the Council of Europe (2001) and explained in the research of Canagarajah (2007, 2009), Beacco (2005), and Coste et al. (1997), regards the speaker not as a dual or multiple monolingual but as a singular communicative agent with an integrated, heterogeneous repertoire. There are five defining features which characterise plurilingual competence: competencies are integrated and not separate; proficiency across languages can be incomplete or unequal and this is tolerated; distinct languages are used for different purposes; competency emerges from social practice rather than formal instruction; and languages are seen as one system rather than separate codes (Canagarajah, 2009). These characteristics set plurilingualism apart from bilingualism and multilingualism and counter the hegemonic monolingual ideology that underlies educational policy in many national contexts including that of Pakistan.

Language Attitudes Toward Plurilingualism

The study of attitudes toward plurilingual practice is not new, and there is an enduring tension between the communal reality of language blending and the normative ideal of monolingual purity. Students in French educational institutes exposed to plurilingual approaches adopted more positive attitudes toward language mixing, particularly at advanced levels of study, as reported by Jeoffrion et al. (2014). Castellotti and Moore (2002) argued that plurilingualism creates chaos and confusion among French language learners. Marquilló Larruy (2000) noted that teachers viewed the practice of mixing languages as disorder rather than integration. Dhaouadi (2006) found that Arab parents and educators were unaware of the benefits of language mixing, but older learners were more tolerant. Khosa (2026) confirmed that the students in Balochistan do not consider plurilingualism as shortcoming on the part of the speaker. She asserted that 91% of the students believed it makes it easy for them to communicate.

Griva and Chostelidou (2011) observed that Greek EFL teachers were positive towards English as a lingua franca, but not so much as to dismiss the importance of plurilingual competence and they supported multilingual curricula. Henni (2017) observed positive attitudes towards code-mixing in the Algerian EFL classrooms where teachers and students deemed it productive for learning. These studies reveal a common pattern: plurilingual practices are widespread but their recognition as legitimate and valuable communicative behaviour is patchy. This recognition is

shaped by monolingual ideological pressures which privilege proficiency in a single standard language.

Plurilingualism in South Asian and Pakistani Contexts

Canagarajah (2009) presents South Asia as a natural ecology of plurilingualism where there is openness to linguistic synergy and not suppression. The history of language contact, trade, migration and colonial encounter in the region has produced communicative norms in which language mixing is the rule rather than the exception. This natural order stands in direct opposition to a language policy in Pakistan which privileges Urdu as the national language and English as the language of learning and upward mobility, while marginalising regional languages – including Balochi and Brahvi – in formal domains (Rahman, 2003). This produces a diglossic condition where speakers are educated to monolingual norms, but live in heteroglossic realities, generating the kind of attitudinal ambivalence attested to in the present study.

As per the authors knowledge, there is a paucity of empirical studies in the published literature that deal specifically with plurilingualism in Balochistan. Studies of multilingualism in the province have predominantly focused on language status and policy (Jahani et al., 2008), while the communicative strategies of individual speakers have been less explored. Thus, by linking the results of the present study with that of the international works on plurilingualism, language attitudes and communicative competence, the present study enters into a largely unmapped empirical territory.

Research Design and Methodology

Design

The study made use of a sequential mixed-methods design as stated by Creswell (2003) and Miles and Huberman (1994) whereby the sources of quantitative and qualitative data supplement and confirm each other. Quantitative data was gathered using a questionnaire with a Likert scale. The collection of Qualitative data was done through recorded and translated oral conversation activities. The combination of both methods made it possible to qualitatively analyse the functional motivations and the attitudes of speakers and to measure the extent of plurilingual practices in the study.

Participants and Sampling

The purposive sample method was used to pick one hundred multilingual students (50 from each university) from two public universities of Quetta. The universities include Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University (SBKWU) and Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUIITEMS). Purposive sampling was used to make sure that each participant had three or more languages in their linguistic repertoires and reflected the main ethnic groups of Balochistan. The study context- public sector universities in a multilingual provincial capital that utilize English as the medium of teaching reflects the contrast between the monolingual customs of formal education and the plurilingual norms of everyday communication is particularly significant.

Instruments

The questionnaire was taken from Rose (2006) and consisted of two sections. The first section asked participants to provide information on their language background, including the languages spoken in their place of residence, the languages used in their universities, and the contents of their individual linguistic repertoires. The second part made up twenty-five questions on a 5-point Likert scale (with strongly agree on end to strongly disagree on the other end) about the participants' attitudes towards plurilingualism, their personal experiences, and their judgements of plurilingual behaviour as competence or deficiency. The statements were categorised into themes such as: language use, language complexes, language and identity, language and society, language learning, and language status.

For the oral activity component, five pairs of participants were asked to converse for five to ten minutes on assigned topics — including the Women Protection Bill, dowry practices, brand consumption, and the security situation in Quetta, using English or Urdu, with freedom to use other languages as required. The researcher also audio-recorded, translated and transcribed the conversations. The topics were selected for their relevance to participants' lived experience and their capacity to elicit authentic, socially embedded language use.

Analysis

Descriptive analysis of questionnaire data was performed using SPSS and frequency distributions and cumulative percentages were generated for each statement. The activity transcriptions were examined quantitatively, by counting and categorising words by language of origin to determine the degree of plurilingual mixing, and qualitatively, through thematic analysis (Creswell, 2012).

The qualitative themes were inductively derived from the data and arranged into seven functional categories (lack of appropriate vocabulary, social practice, habitual use and ease, linguistic integration, gap filling, taboo and controversy, and humour). This analytical framework was rooted in the plurilingual competence framework of Canagarajah (2009) and Coste et al. (1997).

Theoretical Framework

The study triangulates components of five theoretical positions: Silverstein (1996) on language ideology and the social evaluation of linguistic forms; Khubchandani (1997) on the fluid, context-bound character of language identity in South Asia; Makoni (2002) on the constructed and contested character of language boundaries; Canagarajah (2007) on plurilingual competence as integrated social practice; and Garcia (2009) on translanguaging as a teaching and communicative resource. The framework claims that plurilingual competence is marked by integrated rather than added language use, acceptance of differential level of proficiency, purposive use of languages for different communicative purposes and social rather than formal appearance of competence.

Results

Linguistic Background

One hundred percent of the 100 participants stated that they spoke three or more languages, and 98% indicated that additional languages regularly entered their conversations. These results confirm the multilingual nature of the sample and the intensity of cross-language interaction in participants' daily interaction environments. Participants pointed out Pashto (36%) and Urdu (34%) as the dominant languages of their households, with Balochi (14%), Brahvi (13%) and English (0%) being assigned majority status by smaller proportions. However, in the university context, Urdu was the dominant language (45%). It was subsequently followed by Pashto (30%) and English (11%). Balochi (5%) and Brahvi (2%) were minority languages. This reversal of the position of English, from a minority language outside the university to a medium of learning inside the university, relates to the institutional implementation of an English-medium policy on a group for whom English is neither a native nor a community language.

Attitudes Toward Plurilingualism

The questionnaire data point to a predominantly positive attitudinal orientation towards plurilingual practice, with notable exceptions that indicate the persistence of monolingual ideological pressures. Table 1 presents a summary of the cumulative percentages of agreement and disagreement for some selected key statements.

Regarding the issue of plurilingualism as a competence and not a deficit, 57% of respondents marked either agreed or strongly agreed that the mixing of languages is a competence and 33% disagreed. In contrast, when asked if mixing languages was a weakness, 44% agreed and 51% disagreed – a more divided response that indicates mixed feelings about the evaluative framing of the same practice. The difference in opinions to the ability-framing and the weakness-framing, with significantly more agreement in the former, shows that the participants generally have a positive attitude towards plurilingualism but a lingering doubt about its social legitimacy when negatively framed.

A clear majority of participants felt that plurilingualism builds confidence (79%), supports listening (83%), speeds up language learning (85%) and encourages civilised dialogue (64%). The statement that media in different languages is a bridge to mutual understanding received the highest cumulative agreement (83%), showing that plurilingualism is positively perceived in connection to social unity and understanding between cultures. A slight majority disagreed that language mixing is a form of societal pressure (45% disagree vs. 40% agree), demonstrating that the majority of participants' view plurilingual practices as a matter of volition rather than normative compulsion.

The statement most closely associated with monolingual ideology – that speaking other languages takes away one's identity – garnered a closely divided response (50% disagree, 42% agree), suggesting that identity anxiety continues to be a salient attitudinal dimension, especially in a politically polarised region where language and ethnicity are closely aligned. This result matches with the findings of Dhaouadi (2006) and Castellotti and Moore (2002) concerning the association of language loyalty with monolingual purity.

Extent of Plurilingual Practices

The quantitative examination of the 5 discussions that were also recorded offers clear evidence of the scope and extent of plurilingual practices. Table 2 shows the word count and percent of non-primary language usage for the five activities. The percentage of words coming from languages other than the main language of each activity ranged from 40% to 77%. Overall, the pattern showed that none of the activities were monolingual. Urdu was the most commonly employed non-English language across activities, in line with its position as lingua franca in the university context. All activities were seconded by English which means that the participants were familiar with English vocabulary as they had been introduced to it in their studies. Pashto ranked third, with Balochi, Brahvi and other vernaculars such as Sindhi, Seraiki and Punjabi behind it. These patterns support the questionnaire finding that 77% of the participants stated that they utilised words from other languages in their daily conversations.

Functional Categories of Plurilingual Use

Qualitative thematic analysis of the activity transcripts identified seven functional categories through which plurilingual practices were enacted, each corresponding to a distinct communicative motivation.

Lack of Appropriate Vocabulary

The most frequent category was the using of words from other languages when there was no equivalent in the main language of the utterance. Participants used the word in Arabic *israaf* (wasting of material goods with religious meaning) in English talk, the Persian expression *noshi jan* (polite offer or decline of food) which has no English equivalent in English, the Pashto term *zwand* (life) in an otherwise Urdu utterance and the Brahvi term *churth* (not worth worrying about) in Urdu conversation. Such lexical choices indicate the semantic specificity of the cultural and religious vocabulary that defies translation, a phenomenon well documented in contexts that are multi (Canagarajah, 2009). Honour killing also appeared in local language utterances, as there is no functionally equivalent term in Urdu or regional languages for a concept that has its roots in the English-language international human rights discourse.

Social and Religious Practice

A second category of plurilingual use was motivated by deeply ingrained social and religious practices in which equivalent expressions in the utterance's primary language have lost pragmatic or sacred force. The participants used the Islamic greetings — *Assalam o Alaikum*, *Walaikum Assalam* — universally, irrespective of the language of the adjoining talk. This reflected the view that the blessings related to the expression depend on its Arabic form. The term *Jazakallah*, is not only a substitute for thank you, but it is also a prayer – 'may God repay you' – which the secular English version does not convey. The Balochi/Persian term *noshi jan* is a culturally specific formula of hospitality embraced across ethnic groups in Balochistan. The term *walwar* (bride price in Balochistan and KP) is used because this particular cultural institution has no equivalent term in Urdu or English. These uses confirm the claim of Coste et al (1997) that plurilingual ability is indistinguishable from pluricultural competence.

Habitual Use and Ease

The most extensive functional category was habitual use: words from other languages were incorporated into the participants' communicative repertoire not because of lexical gaps but because they were naturalised by frequency of exposure and use. English conjunctions (but, so) were present in Urdu and Pashto utterances, Urdu conjunctions (toh, haan) were present in English utterances, Pashto terms (sha, beykhi, wakhti) were present in English and Urdu sentences, and Balochi terms (badrang, ganok, kuchak) were present across languages. English words like 'worried', 'risk', 'expensive', 'laws', 'restrict' and 'shoot' were consistently preferred over their Urdu equivalents (pareshaan, khatre, mehenga, qanoon, paband, goli marna) – a pattern that reflects the prestige associated with English in Pakistani urban settings. These findings are in line with the questionnaire data where 70% of the participants declared that they switch languages habitually and Canagarajah's (2009) observation that plurilingual practices are developed through social interaction and not formal training.

Linguistic Integration

A fourth category dealt with the morphological integration of words from other languages: in particular, the use of grammatical affixes from one language to modify words from another. Participants made English plural forms with the Urdu suffix -ain (demandain for demands), added the English suffix -s to Urdu stems (molvis for the plural of molvi) and used the Pashto-Urdu suffix -tay with the Pashto word sokhta (bright) to form a plural (sokhtay colours). These morphological integrations, which lead to hybrid forms that are not quite from either source language, are some of the most direct evidence that plurilingual speakers do not consider their languages as separate systems but as a unified, flexible resource – congruent with the theoretical framework of Coste et al. (1997) and the translanguaging perspective of Garcia (2009).

Gap Filling

The flow of conversation at the points of transition between languages or topics was maintained by using gap fillers from different languages. Among the most frequently observed gap fillers were the Urdu conjunctions toh and haan, the English phrase I think, and the Pashto term waley (why), which were used in conversations that were largely conducted in the other language. The use of combined forms — haan really, mera khayal hai I think — demonstrate the naturalisation of cross-linguistic discourse management strategies in the communicative repertoire of participants.

Taboo and Controversial Topics

Participants systematically switched to English when discussing socially sensitive or legally contested issues, such as domestic violence, honour killing and divorce. This pattern suggests that English partially functions as a distancing device in the Baloch communicative context, giving speakers a linguistic register in which taboo concepts can be spoken about with a degree of social and semantic neutrality not available in local languages where such concepts carry culturally embedded stigma.

Humour

The participants exploited the words from minority languages for humour, often drawing on the comic potential of unexpected lexical insertions. Toar (dark complexion) in Pashto was used in the description of a groom, kuchak (dog) in Brahvi/Balochi was used metaphorically to describe someone's miserable condition and ganok (mad/stupid) in Balochi were all used to produce laughter. These uses suggest that plurilingual practices operate not only communicatively but also relationally – as means of constructing in-group solidarity and shared amusement (Rampton, 1995).

Discussion

The Extent of Plurilingualism

The data prove beyond doubt that plurilingual practices are widespread in the communicative behaviour of multilingual university students of Balochistan. The activity data that demonstrates between 40% and 77% non-primary language use in all five conversations highlights that no participant kept a monolingual performance even when explicitly asked to begin in English or Urdu. This finding is similar to Canagarajah's (2009) account of plurilingualism as the natural mode of communication for South Asian multilingual communities, and with the observation of the Council of Europe (2001) that multilinguals develop a communicative competence, to which all their languages contribute, instead of keeping languages in separate compartments.

The prevalence of Urdu and English in the mixing patterns reflects the institutional and symbolic prestige of these languages in the milieu of Balochistan. Urdu is the lingua franca and the default matrix language for inter-ethnic communication while English, the medium of higher education and a marker of social mobility, is a source of lexical borrowing even for the speakers with limited proficiency. The frequent presence of minority language items – Balochi, Brahvi, Seraiki, Sindhi – in the activity data demonstrates that even languages of low institutional prestige are being actively used in the plurilingual repertoire of urban Baloch students.

Attitudes and the Monolingual Ideology

The attitudinal data show a tension characteristic of plurilingual communities in monolingual educational contexts (Jeoffrion et al., 2014): participants generally recognise the communicative utility of plurilingual practices and positively appraise them when they are framed as an ability, but they maintain a residual uncertainty — and a minority retains an active negativity — when practices are framed as deviation from monolingual norms. The response to the identity statement is especially revealing because it is closely divided (50% disagree that language mixing threatens identity, 42% agree): in a province where ethnolinguistic identity is closely linked to political conflict and cultural survival, the association of language purity with identity integrity is unsurprising. It resonates with findings from minority groups under political pressure (Edwards, 2009) and the same monolingual ideology that Castellotti and Moore (2002) found among French learners and Dhaouadi (2006) among Arab parents.

The dominance of Urdu and English in the mixing patterns is a reflection of the institutional and symbolic prestige that these languages enjoy in Balochistan. Urdu is the lingua franca and the default matrix language for inter-ethnic communication while English, the medium of higher

education and a marker of social mobility, is a source of lexical borrowing even for the speakers with limited proficiency. The frequent presence of minority language items – Balochi, Brahvi, Seraiki, Sindhi – in the activity data demonstrates that even languages of low institutional prestige are being actively used in the plurilingual repertoire of urban Baloch students.

However, the strong agreement with statements linking plurilingualism with confidence, acceleration in learning and civilised dialogue indicates that the positive assessment of plurilingual practices is firm and widely shared. The difference in expressed attitudes toward mixing as weakness versus ability, with ability receiving substantially more positive responses, implies that the negative orientation of many participants is toward the discourse of deficiency more than the practice itself. This supports the argument that plurilingualism in Balochistan is a cultural norm experienced positively but evaluated ambivalently in terms of the external normative framework applied to it.

Plurilingualism as Competence

The qualitative data provide the most direct evidence for the central question of the study, whether plurilingualism is a communicative competence or a linguistic deficiency. The seven functional categories identified in the activity analysis show that plurilingual practices are not random, undisciplined or compensatory, but functionally motivated, socially organised and communicatively productive. The lack of appropriate vocabulary category covers cases where plurilingual choices exhibit metalinguistic awareness of the semantic specificity of particular lexical items – speakers choose a Pashto, Brahvi or Arabic term not because they cannot find an equivalent, but because they recognise that the equivalent does not have the same meaning. The social and religious practice category recognises the embedding of plurilingual choices within cultural scripts – speakers employ Islamic Arabic phrases not because they do not have English equivalents but because the equivalents do not contain the sacred dimension that renders the original form pragmatically appropriate. The habitual use documents the internalisation of cross-linguistic forms into the communicative repertoire, a process of naturalisation which is the hallmark of competent, fluent use instead of its absence.

The most captivating confirmation in terms of structural morphology originates from the category of morphological integration. The production of hybrid forms such as *demandain*, *molvis* and *sokhtay* colours does not require a lack of grammatical knowledge but rather its creative application across two linguistic systems at the same time. These forms could not have been produced by a speaker who had no access to the morphological rules of both languages, and the communicative judgement to apply them appropriately. They are evidence of integrated competence in action, in Canagarajah's (2009) sense. The ultimate empirical test is that none of the five activities suffered any breakdown in communication, despite the extensive mixing documented: plurilingual practices facilitated rather than impeded the communicative goals of the participants, confirming that they constitute a communicative strength rather than a deficiency.

Conclusion and Implications

The results of this study demonstrate that plurilingualism is the natural communicative mode of multilingual university students in Balochistan, with a high extent of cross-linguistic practice, a broadly positive attitudinal orientation and a rich repertoire of functionally differentiated

strategies. These are consistent with the theoretical models of Canagarajah (2009), Council of Europe (2001) and Coste et al. (1997) and provide empirical data from a South Asian context which has been almost absent from the international literature on plurilingualism..

The study's main theoretical contribution is its empirical resolution of the competence–deficiency debate in the context of Balochistan. The activity analysis, especially the morphological integration category and the functional specificity of lexical choices across all seven categories, suggests that plurilingual practices are an expression and a requirement of communicative competence, and not a lack of it. The continuing ambivalence evidenced in the attitudinal data is due to the imposition of monolingual ideological norms on a community that has always been plurilingual rather than to any deficit on the part of the speakers themselves.

These findings have important practical implications. Educational policy makers in Balochistan need to reconsider curriculum and assessment frameworks that implicitly or explicitly pathologise plurilingual practices. Building on the plurilingual syllabus models developed in the European context (Kramsch, 2006; Jeoffrion et al., 2014), educators can develop pedagogical approaches that leverage students' existing plurilingual competencies instead of erasing them in the name of an unattainable monolingual ideal. Such approaches would not only consider communicative realities of the students but would also tap a proven resource for language learning, intercultural understanding and inclusion in participation across ethnic communities of Balochistan.

Future research should expand the study to uneducated and rural populations, whose plurilingual practices may be different in extent and character from those of urban students. Cross-provincial studies would enable the investigation of the effect of regional language policy, ethnic composition and contact history on plurilingual practices across Pakistan's multi-lingual landscape. Longitudinal studies might investigate the relationship between plurilingual competence and academic achievement, and thereby provide the evidence base necessary to underpin policy reform. Finally, we would need studies that address specifically gender, age and tribal affiliation as variables in the plurilingual practice, so as to better comprehend the social distribution of this communicative phenomenon in the province.

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