

Language Hierarchy and Symbolic Power in Commercial and Institutional Signage: A Linguistic Landscape Study of Haripur City

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¹ How to cite

Abstract

This study analyzes the linguistic landscape of Haripur city, a district in KPK Province, Pakistan. A total of fifty signs are photographed for this study, including signs from both institutional and commercial sectors. This study follows a qualitative approach due to its interpretive aims, supported by quantitative elements such as frequency counts. The analysis is done through the theoretical framework of linguistic landscape given by Landry and Bourhis (1997), which focuses on the informational and symbolic function of the signs, and Bourdieu's (1991) theory of symbolic power, linguistic capital, and linguistic market. This study focuses on exploring the linguistic patterns and transliteration practices in the public signage of Haripur city and on deciphering the hidden social meanings and power relations behind the use of certain languages in public signage. The findings of the study reveal that Urdu dominates the commercial signage, English occupies the educational, medical, and institutional domains due to its association with prestige, power, and professionalism, Arabic is limited to religious signage, where it occupies a sacred symbolic capital; while Hindko and Pashto are completely absent from the public signage despite their oral dominance in domestic and informal communal domains. The findings also reveal how sign makers make use of transliteration to write English terms in Urdu Nastaliq script, combining the prestige associated with the English language with the accessibility of the Urdu script for the Urdu-literate audience. This study contributes to the growing research in the domain of linguistic landscape in the Pakistani context. The findings of this study may align with other mid-sized cities of the KPK Province.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, language hierarchy, symbolic power, linguistic market, linguistic capital, marginalization, transliteration, ethno-linguistic vitality, symbolic violence

Introduction

Background and Context of the Study

Language is not merely a tool for communication; it reflects power relations, identity, prestige, and sociocultural values. The relationship between language and power is prominent in the linguistic landscape of any area. The concept of linguistic landscape was given by Landry and Bourhis (1997). It includes the language of advertisement billboards, public road signs, places and street names, public signs on government buildings, and commercial shop signs. This definition made signage a legitimate area of sociolinguistic study by revealing which language is prominent, which is marginalized, and how language is used in a particular area to construct power, identity, and communication. The study of LL in a multilingual area is useful in providing the linguistic relationship between multiple languages, including both spoken and written languages that highlights a deeper social hierarchy of a particular society. It includes two types of signs, i.e., top-down signs (produced by government or official bodies: street names, road signs, public notices, school signboards, etc.), and Bottom-up signs (produced by private individuals or business firms: shop names, handwritten notices, wall writings, posters, price lists, etc.). The signs serve both informational (practical knowledge) and symbolic functions (it reflects status, identity, and existing power structures).

The District of Haripur is located in Hazara Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The city provides a rich sociolinguistic environment characterized by multilingual reality. Hindko is the major indigenous language of the region and dominates the oral and community domains. Pashto is the second most spoken language of the region by a significant portion of the population. Urdu performs the role of national language and lingua franca and the language of education, administration, and commerce. English performs the role of modernity, professionalism, and aspirational identity. Despite its rich multilingual environment, Haripur is still

unexplored in the linguistic landscape literature. The present study addresses this gap directly.

The linguistic landscape of a region is never neutral or ideologically innocent. It reflects and actively reproduces the existing language hierarchies and social prestige associated with certain languages. It reflects which languages are symbolically dominant and which languages are excluded from the public signage. In the linguistic landscape of Haripur, as this study highlights, English and Urdu dominate the visual landscape, while Hindko and Pashto, despite being dominant in oral and informal communal domains, are completely absent from the public signage.

Research Questions

1. What languages and scripts are present in the public signage of Haripur city?
2. How does the practice of transliteration in public signage of Haripur city construct commercial prestige and social identity?
3. How does the linguistic landscape of Haripur city reflect symbolic power and linguistic capital as theorized by Bourdieu (1991)?

Statement of the Problem

Haripur despite having rich multilingual environment is unexplored in the linguistic landscape literature. The present study addresses this gap directly. Secondly, the practice of transliteration, a hybrid process in which phonological content of one language is combined with the writing system of another language and results in a text that is foreign and familiar at the same time in the appearance, has received insufficient attention in the Pakistani context generally and Haripur city in particular. This study focuses on the linguistic patterns and transliteration practices employed in the public signage of the Haripur city through a theory driven critical analysis.

Literature Review

¹ Muhammad Haris Saleem. (2026). Language Hierarchy and Symbolic Power in Commercial and Institutional Signage: A Linguistic Landscape Study of Haripur City. *University of Chitral Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 10(1), 78-84. <https://jll.uoch.edu.pk/index.php/jll/article/view/488>

The study of linguistic landscape is an important area in sociolinguistics because it represents the visual display of different languages in public spheres to examine the interplay of language, power, and social hierarchy in multilingual settings. Public signage not only communicates certain information, they reflect broader social relations, ideologies, and power dynamics. The present study draws on the existing research on linguistic landscape and sociological theories related to language and power to analyze the linguistic landscape of the Haripur city.

The concept of linguistic landscape was formally introduced by Rodrigue Landry and Richard Y. Bourhis (1997). According to them, linguistic landscape refers to the language of advertisement billboards, public road signs, places and street names, public signs on government buildings, and commercial shop signs. The linguistic landscape according to them serve two functions i.e. informational (practical knowledge about something) and symbolic function (signs carry ideologies and social prestige). They also gave the concept of ethno-linguistic vitality which refers to the visibility and social value of a language within a particular area. Their work laid down a foundation for later studies on linguistic landscape. The present study also analyzes the linguistic landscape of Haripur city supported by this framework.

Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara, and Trumper-Hecht (2006) studied the multilingual signage in Israel and extended the concept of linguistic landscape by introducing the distinction between two types of signs i.e. top-down signs and bottom-up signs. The top-down signs include the signs produced by government authorities and state institutions, while the bottom-up signs are produced by private individuals or business firms: shop names, handwritten notices, wall writings, posters, price lists etc. According to them linguistic landscape is a symbolic construction of public space and is shaped both by the government policies and actions of the private businesses and sign makers.

The relation between language and power is given by Pierre Bourdieu (1991) in *Language and Symbolic Power*. It comprises three concepts i.e. linguistic capital, symbolic power, and linguistic market. Bourdieu argues that languages are not equal and they carry different social prestige and symbolic capital within different social fields. The dominant languages gain legitimacy and authority through institutional support while languages having less social value are marginalized. In the Pakistani context, English carries high symbolic capital and is associated with prestige and modernity. Urdu carries national capital and Arabic carries sacred capital, while Hindko and Pashto despite their oral dominance are marginalized in the public signage of Haripur.

Rahman (2002) provides an important relation between language, ideology, and power in the Pakistani sociolinguistic context. He argues that English due to its association with professionalism, authority, prestige, and modernity occupies a high social position. Urdu performs the role of collective national identity and language of public administration. The regional languages, however, are marginalized and are not given social prestige and value despite being spoken by thousands of people. This aligns with the present study of linguistic landscape of Haripur in which the indigenous languages are marginalized and absent from the public signage.

Cenoz and Gorter (2006) studied the relation between linguistic landscape and minority languages visibility. They argue that the visibility of minority languages play an important role in

language maintenance, policy making, and community recognition. They argued that the absence of indigenous or minority languages from the public signage can lead to reduced ethno linguistic vitality. The marginalization of minority languages is not a linguistic phenomenon, rather it reflects underlying power structures and state policies related to language planning.

Hussain, Iqbal, and Saleem (2022) explored the linguistic landscape of Peshawar by examining the social prestige associated with English and transliterated English. They found that English signage is associated with elite areas while transliterated English is associated with middle and lower class commercial domains. They argued that through the practice of transliteration the business owners combine the symbolic capital associated with English language and the accessibility of Urdu script for Urdu literate customers. These findings align with the present study where sign makers employ transliteration in signs for the same purpose.

Pennycook (2010) argues that language is a social practice shaped by the everyday social interaction and local cultural context. This is related to the concept of glocal English in which the global English is used and shaped by the local sociocultural context and needs. It asserts that the linguistic choices in public signage is not neutral, rather they are actively rooted and shaped by the local histories, identities, and the existing power structures.

Overall, the existing study shows that linguistic landscapes are closely associated with the notions of power, prestige and ideology. Previous studies show that the visibility of certain languages or the absence of indigenous languages from the public spaces reflect and reinforce the existing language hierarchies and institutional policies. However, no study explores the linguistic landscape of Haripur city. This study addresses this gap by exploring the linguistic patterns and transliteration practices employed across the public signage in Haripur city.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This research follows a qualitative research design. The qualitative research design is appropriate as the study focuses on the interpretation and explanation of social meanings behind the linguistic choices in public signage rather than producing statistically generalizable results. Within qualitative approach, the research follows an ethnographic analytical sub-design which means that the interpretations depend on the contextual knowledge of Haripur of the researcher. This ensures that signs are studied in the broader socio-cultural and linguistic context of the region and not in isolation.

The data is collected from the three main areas within Haripur city. The first is the Main Bazar Haripur, which provides a rich data of commercial signs. The second area is the GT Road corridor which provides a mix of both commercial and institutional signs. The third is institutional zone which provides data related to government, educational and medicinal institutions related signs. The three areas are selected in order to collect a diverse data and to ensure linguistic diversity among the signs.

The data is collected primarily through systematic photographic documentation of the signs. A total of fifty signs were photographed for the study through purposive sampling. The signs contain both commercial and institutional signs. Out of fifty signs sixteen signs are institutional while thirty four are commercial. There are certain reasons why there are more commercial signs as compared to the institutional signs. Commercial signs are far more numerous in any city as compared to institutional signs. Another

reason is that the commercial signs are diverse in language choices as they are produced by the private sectors who have a complete freedom of language choice in the signs. The commercial signs also serve Bourdieuan framework directly. The concept of linguistic market is best observed in commercial domains where individuals make language choices inspired by the symbolic capital and where market operates more visibly. The signs are organized into nine collages which are presented in the appendix section of the research.

The research is guided by a dual theoretical framework. At the descriptive level it draws on Landry and Bourhis's (1997) framework of linguistic landscape. It focuses on the distinction between informational and symbolic function of the signs. It also explains other concepts such as ethno-linguistic vitality (how valuable, prestigious, and socially important a language is in a community or area). On the interpretive level, this study is based on Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital (social prestige of a language), symbolic power (authority associated with a particular language), misrecognition (acceptance of social inequality as natural), and linguistic market (the social setting where languages function and gain different social values) to look for the underlying social meanings and power dynamics behind language choices in public signage. These two frameworks are complementary, as Landry and Bourhis's framework explains the linguistic patterns in the linguistic landscape while Bourdieu's framework explains why certain patterns are there and what social meanings it conveys implicitly.

Analysis and Discussion

Overview

The analysis is based on the three research questions of the study. At first, it describes the signs and the languages and scripts present in them and then it move towards the interpretation of these signs based on social and cultural context of Haripur. The ideas in the analysis are connected to the framework of Landry and Bourhis (1997) and Bourdieu (1991). This chapter comprises three major themes. The first theme focuses on the distribution of different languages across the public signage. The second theme explores the practice of transliteration and multilingualism across the fifty signs. The third theme deals with the symbolic power and socio-economic value of the languages in the existing linguistic hierarchy of the Haripur city.

Linguistic Patterns in the Public Signage of Haripur City

The most important and fundamental finding of the study is the distribution of different languages across the public signage of Haripur city. Urdu is present in all the signs, in one way or another. In some signs it is present as a primary language while in others it is present as a secondary language below English, or in transliterated form in Roman characters. The second most present language across the set of fifty signs is English. It is present in twenty eight signs out of fifty making it the second most dominant language. Arabic appears in six signs only, mostly the religious institutional signs or certain commercial signs with religious affiliation. The two main indigenous languages of Haripur city, i.e. Hindko and Pashto are completely absent from the signs. Despite the fact that the majority of the speakers of the region either speak Hindko or Pashto, no single sign contains these languages in written form, in any position.

This distribution of the different languages across the signs reveals a clear linguistic hierarchy of the region. Urdu is the most dominant and commonly used language based on font size, position, and visual prominence. It is dominant in thirty signs making it the most visible language of the public signage of Haripur city. English shows its dominance in twelve signs mostly in medical

sector, private educational, and institutional signage. Arabic is dominant in none as it mostly co-occurs with Urdu in the religious signs where it occupies a symbolically elevated position. The other two languages, Hindko and Pashto, in terms of Landry and Bourhis (1997), are present in the condition of zero ethno linguistic vitality within the visual public signage of the city. It means that these languages have a weak ethno linguistic presence in public signage.

Among the sixteen institutional signs, English is dominant in seven signs. This number raises to ten if we consider the bilingual institutional signs where English occupies a primary visual position. The educational institutional signs such as The Peace School and College (S6), Government Girls Degree College (S7), and Sir Syed Model School and College (S8) are entirely in English having no sign of Urdu language. The S8 goes farthest by adding the tagline 'Your child's future is our priority' which makes the English language not merely a language of naming but also a language of futurity and intellectual development. The deputy commissioner office sign (S1) shows a classic top-down bilingual approach, where both English and Urdu are present in a parallel fashion with equal visual prominence and carrying the same information. The road signs Western Circular Road (S9) and Rai Ama Road (S10) follow the same pattern of parallel bilingualism reflecting national language policy standardizing force. These signs carry informational function that they address both English and Urdu literate population and a symbolic function that both Urdu and English are the legitimate languages of the administration. However, the sign Police driving school (S13) comprises only Urdu reflecting inconsistency in the language policy at the institutional level. A study by Hussain (2025) on Islamabad's linguistic landscape shows that English performs the function of elitism and modernity in official and institutional signs, while the presence of Urdu is tied more to the government language policies and also to signal national identity.

Among the thirty four commercial signs, Urdu is present in twenty three signs making it the dominant language of local commercial signage, for instance, food stalls signs (S36, S37, S38), traditional clothing stores (S28), and general merchandise (S43). English is present in five and mixed or present in parallel to Urdu in six, which shows that local businesses mainly uses Urdu as a primary mode of communication. Urdu is also used for aesthetic and poetic purposes, especially on carts and street vendors. For instance, the Shahi Qulfi cart sign is particularly poetic with a couplet written on it, "Ujale apni yadon ke humare sath rehne do, Na jane kis gali me zindagi ki sham hojye". This shows emotional and aesthetic use of language in advertising on a sign making Urdu language a vehicle of local culture and identity. The Awami Jalsa banner (S42), Pakistan ka matlab kya with Kalima Tayyaba alongside it on a wall (S41), and the Sadqa-e-Fitr notice (S40), are all written in Urdu with Arabic phrases for religious identity and authority. These signs show that Urdu acts as vehicle of political mobilization and national religious discourse. The symbolic role of Urdu in these signs is clear as it reflects communal, Islamic and religious identity. The dominance of Urdu in commercial signs and English in Institutional signs is one of the central empirical findings of the study which shows how different fields require different linguistic capital valuations. The difference between institutional and commercial signage is similar to the findings of Naeem et al. (2022), which shows that language is strategically chosen in Pakistani political and institutional messages to signal authority and alignment with the existing power structures, rather than communicating inclusively with local people.

The informational function of the public signage of Haripur city is also important as per the Landry and Bourhis's (1997) idea that signs serve both symbolic and informational role. This informational role is primarily performed by Urdu in Haripur's commercial

signage, as people can easily read and understand Urdu. However, in government institutions, educational institutions and hospitals, English plays the primary informational role and in some places a mixture of Urdu and English plays this role. This may pose difficulty for those who cannot read and understand English. The S14 sign presents doctor's credentials (B.D.S, M.G.D.S, M.A.C.S, R.G.D.S) in English asserting symbolic function of professional credibility and scientific authority through its association with the global language of science and medicine. Bourdieu (1991) calls this convertible capital. It means that using English language on medical signs bring economic benefits as clients see English as a symbol of expertise and trustworthiness. The signs, Trauma Center (S15) and NO Parking (S11), may be difficult to read for those who can only read Urdu. This raises a concern, i.e. which social group is excluded and who gets the information. This is an informational failure and a symbolic declaration according to Landry and Bourhis's framework of linguistic landscape. It implies through the language that the intended audience is the educated and English literate segment of the population by positioning others in a secondary position.

Transliteration in the Signs

Transliteration is one of the most distinctive characteristics of the linguistic landscape of Haripur. Transliteration is not simply monolingualism or purely bilingualism, it is a hybrid process in which phonological content of one language is combined with the writing system of another language and results in a text that is foreign and familiar at the same time in the appearance. In the set of fifty signs, the practice of transliteration is documented in twenty one signs (both commercial and institutional) in which English loanwords are rendered in Urdu PersoArabic Nastaliq script, or less frequently, Urdu words are written in Roman characters.

The richest examples of this practice can be seen in the medical and pharmaceutical signs. Signs, Farid medical store (S22), Malik Hasnain medical store (S24), and Hamid medical store (S26) write the term 'medical store' completely in Urdu Nastaliq script. Similarly the sign, merry beauty salon (S17) writes the term 'beauty salon' entirely in Nastaliq script. The sign, Dani hairdresser (S19) writes the term 'hairdresser' in Urdu Nastaliq characters. This practice is also present in other sectors, for instance, the sign Khan Lala electric and electronics (S33) writes 'electric and electronics' in Urdu Nastaliq, Umar electronics (S35) and Mian electronics (S34) writes the term 'electronics' entirely in Nastaliq, Bismillah hardware and paint store (S44) writes 'hardware and paint' in Nastaliq, Modern aluminum glass and UPVC works (S50) is entirely written in Nastaliq characters, Ajmeer fresh flower (S45) renders 'fresh flower' in Nastaliq, and Khan optical center (S49) writes 'optical and contact lens' in Urdu Nastaliq characters. In some signs both Nastaliq script and Roman characters are used. For instance, the sign M.A medical store (S23) and Awan medical store (S25) comprises both Roman and Nastaliq script positioning themselves for both English-literate and Urdu-literate audience. Mahmood et al. (2021) in their study on Nowshera district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa found that both official and commercial signs were dominated by transliteration strategies which shows the high social and symbolic prestige of English despite Pakistan's official bilingual policy.

The English phrases are written in a language that is easily accessible and read by the target audience i.e. Urdu literate. The practice of transliteration performs a dual function, it carries sufficient symbolic capital associated with the English language and is accessible to the local population that is Urdu-literate. Bourdieu

(1991) calls this a 'profit of distinction'. The sign maker is making a calculated linguistic market decision by writing certain terms such as 'medical, electronics, beauty salon, hair dresser, hardware' in Urdu Nastaliq script rather than Roman characters. English vocabulary (commercial, medical and technical) carries a sufficient symbolic capital and signals modernity, professionalism, and technical expertise. In this way, transliteration performs both communicative and socio-symbolic function in the signage. The prestige is provided by the use of English terms, while the Urdu Nastaliq script provides the accessibility. In this way transliteration balances the two markets by blending elements from both the markets, the global market where English is valued and the local market where Nastaliq script is valued. The study by Manan et al. (2017) showed that Englishized Urdu and Urduized English dominate the public signage of Quetta, while local languages were completely absent from the linguistic landscape which is characterized by extensive use of English Language.

The sign Ajmeri garments boutique (S30) is a sophisticated example of transliteration and signals social distinction and commercial prestige. The term 'boutique' which is originally of a French origin is adopted into Pakistani commercial English as a marker of fashion and is written in Urdu Nastaliq script. Although the shop name 'Ajmeri Garments' is written in Urdu, the transliterated term 'boutique' is written in Nastaliq which adds a layer of cosmopolitan prestige to the traditional sign. This elevates the status of the shop by signaling the ideas of fashion and exclusivity through the vocabulary choice i.e. 'boutique' rather than 'kapro ki dukan'. This example also shows how transliteration functions as a form of linguistic hybridity in the linguistic landscape of the Haripur city. It combines local commercial vocabulary with modern fashion vocabulary, thus producing a hybrid textual identity, reflecting modern consumer culture and local cultural values.

So, transliteration is not a complete dependence on English nor a resistance to it, rather it is a hybrid practice in which two linguistic systems are merged to produce a hybrid textual identity. The globalized English vocabulary is adopted in the local context through Urdu Nastaliq script giving rise to a glocalised English. This asserts that English is glocalised in the commercial signage of Haripur city. In this way, it signals modernity and local cultural values simultaneously.

Language Hierarchy and Symbolic Power

The third most significant theme of the study is the extent to which the linguistic landscape of Haripur city reflects and reproduces the relations of symbolic power. This is well explained by Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital. This illuminates three interconnected dimensions: the linguistic hierarchy within public signage, the distribution of linguistic capital across the signs, and the symbolic violence created through the marginalization and absence of indigenous languages from the public spaces.

At the level of individual signs, the linguistic hierarchy is visually expressed through position, font size, and prominence of the languages. In most of the bilingual signs, English occupies the dominant visual placement, appearing at the top position and in a larger font size. The signs, M.A Medical store (S23) and Awan medical store (S25) follows this trend where English appears on the top position. In the sign, 'HARIPUR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY' (S3), English characters are written in a larger font on

the top position forming an arc while the Urdu Nastaliq transliteration is written below the Roman characters. This is the materialization of the symbolic linguistic hierarchy in the local linguistic market in Bourdieu's terms. It reflects authority, prestige, and status within local linguistic market, a hierarchy that is so naturalized that no one, either sign makers or the sign readers, can recognize it consciously. This hierarchy is unquestioned due to the reason that the association between English and authority, modernity, and professionalism is so deeply rooted within the existing social order. In this way the linguistic hierarchy is not only reflected through the public signage but is actively reproduced through it in the public space.

In the domain based analysis, there are three linguistic capital regimes functioning within the linguistic landscape of Haripur. The first is the regime of professional and institutional capital in which English performs the role of legitimacy and institutional authority. This regime is prominent in medical and educational institutions signage where English is associated with professionalism and social prestige. The Dental specialist sign (S14) illustrates this phenomenon. It presents doctor's qualifications and credentials (B.D.S, M.G.D.S, M.A.C.S, R.G.D.S) in English asserting symbolic function of professional credibility and scientific authority through its association with the global language of science and medicine. The choice of English language for these qualifications is not accidental, rather it plays the role of professional capital. Similarly, in the sign, Trauma center (S15), the hospital name and its service description is written entirely in English language without any Urdu script. This sign reflects that English is the unquestioned language of medical healthcare. English performs the role of convertible capital in Bourdieu's term. The linguistic practices generate symbolic capital which in turn is converted into socioeconomic advantage. Through English, the medical and educational institutions claim social prestige and competitive advantage in the local linguistic market.

The second regime is the administrative capital of Urdu. This is visible in government and state related signs. The signs, Neighborhood council (S2), Police driving training school (S13), the political banner (S42) are all written primarily in Urdu Nastaliq script. It reflects that Urdu is the language of collective national identity, political mobilization, and civic administration. Even in some signs where English script is present, such as the DC office (S1) and the road signs (S9 and S10), Urdu is also present which reflects the state's implicit language policy. Urdu confirms the official and authorized nature of the institutional signs. Whereas English is associated with modernity, expertise, and education, Urdu is linked to nationalist ideology. The presence of Urdu in government and political signs reflects a shared national identity that transcends regional and ethnic differences. In this way Urdu language not only reflects the state ideology but actively reproduces it.

The third regime is the sacred capital of Arabic which is primarily present in religious institutional signs or certain commercial signs with religious affiliation. It can be seen in the signs such as Jamia Khadija (S4), Jamia masjid Qadria (S5), and Dar ul Uloom Islamia Rehmania (S40), where it is not just a communicative medium for the readers, rather it shows religious authority and legitimacy. The sign (S41), also contains Arabic verse on it. The Arabic calligraphy and verses on the signs perform its role as a form of consecration i.e. it sanctify the institutions through the language of divine revelations. Just like English is associated with modernity and professionalism, and Urdu with administration and collective national identity, Arabic acts as a symbolic capital insulated entirely from the commercial linguistic market and its competitive pressures. The use of Arabic in a sign transforms it from mere an

informational entity to something with authority and legitimacy within the Islamic religious field. Furthermore the use of Arabic script and calligraphy in the signs reflects an ideological connection between language and religion in the Pakistani society. Through this practice, these religious signs not only reflects but actively reproduces Islamic symbolic order and ideology.

The most important finding of the study is the complete absence of the two major indigenous languages, Hindko and Pashto, from the set of fifty signs. Although Hindko is spoken widely across Haripur and Pashto is also spoken by the larger population, both the languages are absent entirely from the public signage. Despite the fact that these languages have a strong oral presence in the region, they are neither present in primary form on any sign nor in secondary form, not even in transliterated form across the signs. Nikolaou and Shah (2019) surveyed the shop signs in Swat and found that Pashto was almost entirely absent from the signage even though it is the language of the majority population of the District, while English and Urdu dominated the commercial signs.

The exclusion of these local languages from public signage of the city is not accidental, it is systematic and socially patterned. According to Bourdieu (1991) this absence is a form of symbolic violence. This term refers to the forms of dominance that is so internalized and normalized that it is no longer seen as dominance at all, rather it feels natural. The non-representation of two major indigenous languages in the public signage of Haripur city communicates a powerful implicit message i.e. these languages are a part of domestic and private sphere and do not belong to commercial or institutional life. These languages are limited to informal communal domains and are excluded from spaces associated with professionalism, authority and public visibility. Most interestingly, the sign makers do not make conscious political choices and decisions by excluding these languages from the signs, they act in accordance to the deeply rooted understanding of which language occupies higher social prestige, status, and commercial value in the linguistic market. Bourdieu calls this misrecognition at work, the absence of the indigenous languages from the public signage is not seen as exclusion but as something natural, the way things always have been. As a result the social inequalities are perceived as something ordinary, natural, and unquestionable. The exclusion of these languages from the signs is simply how the signs are expected to look. Yousafzai (2022) analyzed the public transport signage in Peshawar and found that there is hierarchy even among the local languages and that the absence of languages is not uniform across types of signs, where Pashto was the most dominant language while Hindko was entirely absent from the linguistic landscape.

The contrast between the presence of Arabic and the absence of Hindko and Pashto from public signage is revealing. Despite the fact that the majority of the people in Haripur cannot speak Arabic, it appears prominently on religious institutional signs i.e. mosques and madrassas. This is due to the fact that Arabic, being a divine language of revelation and religious legitimacy, possesses a sacred capital in the religious field. On the other hand, Hindko and Pashto, despite having thousands of speakers in the region, is absent from the signs as they possess no recognized capital within institutional, commercial, and administrative fields. This makes these languages invisible from the public signage despite their strong oral communicative presence. It aligns with the Bourdieu's idea regarding language and power i.e. the property of linguistic capital is not inherent to languages, rather it is determined by the social fields and fields of power in which these languages function. The value of a language is not determined by the number of speakers of that language nor by how beneficial it is in daily communication, but

by collectively shared and institutionally reinforced beliefs about which languages to be excluded from the public signage and which languages are worth social prestige and public display. In the linguistic landscape of Haripur, English possesses authority due to its association with modernity and expertise, Urdu through its association with collective national identity and state policy, and Arabic through its association with the religion. Hindko and Pashto despite their dominance in oral communication are excluded from public display because they lack institutional authority and recognition. The visibility of English, Urdu, and Arabic, and invisibility of Hindko and Pashto in public signage reveals how linguistic landscape of an area not only reflects the existing language hierarchies but also reproduces and reinforces the broader hierarchies of power and which languages are allowed to be seen or excluded from the public display.

Major Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Major Findings

This analysis yields five major findings.

- 1- Urdu is the most visibly dominant language present in the majority of the signs in primary, secondary, or transliterated form. It is strongly present in local commercial domains where it performs the function of natural language of business and public communication.
- 2- English is the second most dominant language in public signage of Haripur city. It functions as a source of symbolic capital, modernity, and professionalism especially in the institutional, private educational and medical signage.
- 3- Arabic occupies a limited but prestigious position across the public signage in the city and is present in religious signs such as mosques and madrasa signage. It carries a symbolic value due to its association with Islam and divine revelation.
- 4- Hindko and Pashto despite having thousands of speakers and their oral dominance in domestic and informal communal domains is entirely missing from the public signage. The absence of these languages from the public signage reflects a symbolic exclusion which means that these languages are not suitable for institutional or commercial display.
- 5- Transliteration is one of the most significant practices across the signs appearing in twenty one signs in which English terms are written in Urdu Nastaliq script. In this way the sign makers benefit from the prestige and symbolic value of English language while maintaining the accessibility of the signs to a wider audience by using Urdu Nastaliq script.

Conclusion

This study has examined the linguistic landscape of Haripur city by analyzing fifty signs from both commercial and institutional domains. This research focuses on linguistic patterns, distribution of different languages in public signage, symbolic hierarchy, and transliteration practices across the signs. The signs are analyzed through the linguistic landscape lens of Landry and Bourhis (1997) which focuses on the symbolic and informational function of the public signs. This study also draws on the concepts given by Bourdieu (1991) such as symbolic power, linguistic capital, and linguistic market to interpret the underlying social meanings across the public signage of Haripur city. The findings of the study clearly

reveals the existing language hierarchy in the public signage of the city. Urdu is the most dominant language of commercial sector where it functions as a source of collective national identity and public communication. English appears mostly in institutional, private educational and medical signage where it acts as a symbolic capital associated with prestige, modernity, and authority. Arabic appears in religious signs where it functions as a symbol of sacred prestige. One of the most important findings of the study is the complete absence of two major indigenous languages, Hindko and Pashto, from the public signage despite being spoken by a larger segment of the population. This highlights the symbolic violence of the indigenous languages from the public display. The study also draws on the practice of transliteration by the sign makers where English vocabulary is written in Urdu Nastaliq script to signal prestige and also make it accessible for the public to read at the same time. This highlights the social benefits associated with English language. In this way the linguistic landscape of a city, according to Landry and Bourhis, not only reflects the existing language hierarchies but actively reproduce and reinforce them.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Future studies should extend the research to different parts of Haripur district such as rural areas, semi-urban areas, and smaller markets to understand whether the linguistic patterns remain same there or vary.
2. Interviews with the local shopkeepers, business owners, government officials, and school administrators to understand their motivation and underlying ideologies behind their language choices in public signs.
3. Future research can explore ways to increase the social prestige and visibility of the indigenous languages such as Hindko and Pashto in public signage.

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Appendix

Collages of the Signs

