“Say a Sentence”: Drawing an Interactional Link between Organizations, Language Ideologies, and Coloniality

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ABSTRACT

Previous critical work on language ideologies surrounding English in postcolonial spaces has shown how perduring colonial logics are repurposed into contemporary discourses of value and class (Reyes 2017; Tupas 2019). This article builds on this work by examining a language-policing incident in an urban Pakistani café in which the owners link modernity, wealth, and professionalism to Western English competency. I further interrogate this interaction using a lens informed by organizational studies and decolonial work on structural whiteness to show how linguistic hegemonies working at the intersections of race, class, and organizational hierarchy in so-called *post*colonial spaces can still embody and promote Anglocentric ideologies. Finally, in understanding how language policing works as a scalar act, this article ends with a discussion of how actors in positions of power can appeal to conflicting notions of scale to mask their larger ideologies as part of standard organizational practices, divorced from any larger context.

Decolonial scholars argue that contemporary ideas surrounding the production of knowledge, rationality, and modernity uphold and are upheld by the structures and logics of colonialism (Mignolo 2007; Quijano 2007). In other words, colonial ideologies are reproduced in all aspects of society because the contemporary world is built on a foundation of coloniality. Indeed, language as a “non-neutral medium” (Duranti 2011) can also reflect colonial influences. The semiotic processes outlined in Irvine and Gal’s (2000) landmark

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Signs and Society, volume 11, number 1, winter 2023.
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Published by The University of Chicago Press for the Semiosis Research Center, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies.
https://doi.org/10.1086/722838

piece elucidate the ways in which linguistic practices create axes of differentiation that have not only fueled historical colonial structures but also continually serve to create and reinforce social hierarchies initiated in colonialism. Incorporating Mignolo's (2007) argument that contemporary ideologies of neoliberalism and global modernity are the extensions and results of colonial logics, this article works from the assumption that linguistic ideologies regarding English competency in contemporary Pakistan, even if they appear to emerge solely from modern categories of class, are also reflective of enduring colonial legacies of racial hierarchies.

The focus of this article is a language-policing incident in contemporary urban Pakistan promoted by the owners of an upscale café in Islamabad on the organization's Instagram account. The analysis illustrates how the repurposing of colonial logics into present-day contexts can be disguised through specific positionings of scale, whereby speakers resituate a practice within a different time and space to imbue it with a different contextual meaning. When organizations are responsible for this repurposing, as is the case in this article, this obfuscation oftentimes involves scaling down to the level of organizational practice so that what might appear to be a discriminatory hegemonic structure is reframed as something unique to the organizational in-group, devoid of any larger social influence. My discussion seeks to illuminate how actors responding to the incident on social media defend or critique the organization's behavior by appealing to competing scalar discourses at global, national, local, and historical levels.

Prior work on ideologies regarding English has shown that colonial logics of class and value have been remapped onto contemporary social structures across various global contexts. In the Philippines, for example, Reyes (2017) shows us how colonial ideologies and figures are replicated and repurposed for contemporary class narratives in modern-day Filipino universities. Reyes demonstrates how distinctions between colonial figures (the colonialized "mestizo" and the colonized "pure Filipino") and their contemporary counterparts (the "decadent Westernized wealthy" and the "moral middle class") are delineated through their speech. Through code-switching that is seen as "performative" and a prosody that is deemed "dramatic," the wealthy (*Conyo*) become marked as excessive and culturally traitorous, leading to an ideology that values one way of speaking over another. However, Reyes points out that notions of Conyo speech and its inappropriateness are more informed by listeners who are projecting specific attitudes about the wealthy (i.e., "listening subjects") rather than actual linguistic data (see also Inoue 2003; Flores and Rosa 2015). In other words, entrenched colonial ideas around class and culture were taken up by contemporary Filipinos to construct social divisions through the lens of language. Tupas

(2019) elucidates a similar point in his examination of how class and colonialism are entwined in the "uneven Englishes" of Filipino call centers, arguing that neoliberal capitalism serves to reproduce colonial logics of labor by only giving opportunities to workers based on their perceived English competency.

My analysis follows a similar theoretical framework as Reyes (2017) and Tupas (2019) in that I examine linguistic ideologies regarding English as reproducing logics of coloniality. I employ an interactionally focused lens to better understand how language ideologies may be evoked in ways that are organizationally constitutive (Cooren et al. 2011), creating a designated scale (the organization) in which a language policy is assigned. Specifically, I examine a language-policing interaction that took place in the Islamabad restaurant Cannoli by Café Soul. In this conversation, recorded for the café's Instagram profile, the two owners interview a manager and direct him to "say a sentence" in English. After he struggles to find something to say, the two owners mock him, implying that he is overpaid and underqualified. I argue the owners in this interaction participate in the production of a syncretic ideology that intertwines the historical residue of colonialism, national ideas of class, and neoliberal notions of value, resonating with Susan Phillips's (2004, 498) description of "new systems of inequality in which European form and content have acquired great value in non-European systems of symbolic capital." Moreover, these systems of inequality are masked by competing available scales, as actors relocate the interaction from the global or national scale to the strictly organizational.

To delineate these conflicting scales, I further examine the social media backlash to the original language policing incident by presenting two video rebuttals that accuse the two café owners of classist, Eurocentric values, contextualizing the incident as Pakistani social elitism, while also invoking latent colonial ideologies of whiteness. Finally, I examine the café's social media post in the ensuing scandal after this interaction was posted online in early 2021, as the owners tried to defend themselves against these accusations, recontextualizing the incident as playful "banter." The goals of this article are thus (1) to examine how contemporary ideologies of class and language in Pakistan not only repurpose but also obfuscate colonial ideas regarding race, value, and hierarchy and (2) to understand how the flexibility of scale contributes to this obfuscation by giving actors the ability to frame a practice as divorced from wider contexts.

Listening Subjects

Recent work on the connection between racial ideologies and linguistic ideologies show that there are normative ideologies around language that deem certain languages as “belonging” to certain races, and vice versa (Rosa and Flores 2017; Rosa 2019). These analyses show there are deeply embedded ideas in our social institutions and structures that prioritize not only certain varieties of language but also the speakers who are seen as inhabiting those varieties (Flores and Rosa 2015; Cushing 2019). In the United States, for example, the variety of English that is perceived as belonging to white people is highly valorized, but even when racialized speakers replicate this variety perfectly, listeners still claim that the speaker is somehow deficient or inferior (Flores and Rosa 2015). Critical scholars of work studies have also written about this double bind with attention to Black professionals who are pressured to perform whiteness in the service of their corporate (i.e., organizational) identities (Ferguson and Doherty 2021). This work on double binds and senses of “appropriateness” shows that, while raciolinguistic ideologies that reproduce colonial logics can surface in overt ways, they can also be enacted by covert sociocultural pressures exerted on both the white and the racialized subject.

These pressures, sometimes conceptualized as the audience (real or otherwise) to which a speaker orients, are often referenced in academic literature as the “listening subject.” Inoue (2003) is credited with first bringing attention to this idea in her description of the history of Japanese “women’s speech.” She explains how normative language ideologies in nineteenth-century Japan were upheld and reinforced by elite “overhearers” who reported the overheard speech of schoolgirls as defective. While Inoue does talk about specific upper-class Japanese men who criticized the speech of women at the turn of the century, she argues that, more importantly, these practices created a psychic figure who went on to pervade the social unconscious. This idea resonates with Fanon’s ([1952] 1986) description of internalized colonial attitudes, which helps elucidate how covert, external acts of policing lead to internalized self-regulation. Building from Inoue’s initial conceptualization, the listening subject framework has been mobilized to examine the relationship between language and race (Rosa and Flores 2017; Slobe 2018), class (Reyes 2017), and citizenship (Pak 2021). To better delineate the specific beliefs surrounding the value and worth attached to English in the Pakistani context, I will briefly review the role that English plays in the sociocultural milieu and how that importance is derived from colonial Anglocentric legacies.

The Role of English in Pakistan

Within Pakistan, the government has no official language policy, and thus, schools are left without any guidance on what languages should be taught or used in the classroom (Jabeen 2020), leaving curricula driven by market forces or pragmatic concerns while ignoring the cultural importance of a language. English-medium education is seen as the ideal in urban centers like Islamabad and Lahore because of the economic opportunities it provides (Ahmad et al. 2018); however, studies have shown that low-fee English-medium school—which, ostensibly, should provide similar opportunities to students from less wealthy families—do not have a strictly applied curriculum, meaning that students at these schools do not develop high degrees of English proficiency (Manan et al. 2015). Furthermore, the national desire for English has created universalistic approaches to language education without considering the different home languages and linguistic capacities with which students are equipped (Shamim 2011). While Urdu is often held up as the "national language," it is often stigmatized and is seen as less valuable than English as many white-collar jobs in Pakistan specifically request that applicants have proficiency in English (Sikandar 2017). Moreover, Urdu is often positioned as language that is laden with religious connotations and historical importance (Durrani 2012; Sikandar 2017). Indeed, Urdu's positioning as a national language is due to its role in helping form a salient Muslim identity in the country (Rahman 2010), and it is only spoken as a first language by 7.5–8 percent of the population (Rahman 2006, 2019). This positioning is in direct contrast to notions of English as carrying meanings related to Westernization, secularism, and modernity, even in otherwise marginalized groups. For example, joke tellers in South Asian contexts can operationalize specific figures who, in their lack of familiarity with English, are seen to embody a backward, rural mindset (Hall 2019). This language-based humor allows marginalized groups, such as queer youth, to mobilize ideologies related to the modernity that comes with competently speaking English to position themselves as more modern or urban. Furthermore, practices that explicitly incentivize learning English have been enacted across South Asia. For example, the privatization of India in the 1990s created an avenue for Western business interests, and so being able to speak English became a valuable skill on the job market (Mohanty and Panda 2017). Thus, speaking English—specifically the variety of English associated with exclusive English-medium schools and corporate positions—carries tangible connotations of class and wealth in both Pakistan and the region at large. Just as one of the regional languages of the subcontinent can index where a speaker is from, through embedded colonial ideas surrounding class, value, and modernity, English can mark a speaker as occupying a position of wealth or privilege.

The Indian subcontinent (the area currently made up of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives) was largely under the official rule of the British Raj from 1858 to 1947, although the British (and their language) were actually present much earlier. During that period, English was introduced as a prestige language, and the system of the Raj disrupted the linguistic landscape as more people were incentivized or forced to learn English (Khubchandani 1997). As one might expect, the ideology that prioritized English over other languages did not disappear with independence in 1947. Rather, through a process of fractal recursivity (see Irvine and Gal 2000), the linguistic distinction between colonizer and colonized was remapped onto the more apparent class distinctions that filled the vacuum left by colonial rule.

Limits of space prevent me from crafting a detailed depiction of the complexities surrounding English in Pakistan, or indeed South Asia at large. While this is by no means a complete sketch of the linguistic landscape of Pakistan, this background is important to analyze the language policing act of UZM and DIA, the two owners of Cannoli café, and the linguistic ideologies they reproduce. In my analysis of their interaction with their manager OWS, not only do I examine how they display a capitalist/colonial language ideology that ties one's worth to one's English competency, but I also seek to delineate the ways in which this policing is central to their organization, showing the construction of the relevant scale.

Language Policing and Scale

"Language policing" is an act where one participant in an interaction chastises, berates, or otherwise attempts to regulate another's speech (Blommaert et al. 2009; Henry 2021; Raymond et al., forthcoming). In an interaction, if a speaker isn't conforming to the ideals of another participant's language ideology, that actor might engage in language policing, making the listening subject now relevant to whatever is being done in the interaction. Language policing can be read as attempting to enforce a language policy, whether that policy is an agreed upon convention or reflects an individual's language ideology. Many examples of language policing are tied to the norms linked with a specific organization or institution, even if those policies aren't explicitly inscribed in the rules governing that context (Hazel 2015). While much work examines language policing as it arises from preexisting systems of power, we should view language policing as an inherently neutral act that reflects whatever covert or overt language ideology is perceived as relevant in an interaction. Language policing does not, in and of itself, constitute an act of coloniality, but rather, language policing is an act that serves to uphold linguistic ideologies that can be (and often are) rooted in colonial values.

While language policing is frequently enacted for broader hegemonic purposes, this slight distinction helps reinforce the link between language policing and whatever specific organizational context is relevant in the interaction. For example, within an American school, language policing can explicitly function in the service of coloniality by forcing students to prioritize English over their home language (Cushing 2019), but similarly, language policing can also serve to negate Anglocentric ideals in the foreign language classroom (Amir and Musk 2013). Furthermore, language policing can be designed for the expressed purposes of inclusivity, such as the policing that occurs to erase discriminatory or derogatory language in online spaces (Collister 2014). The diverse iterations of language policing show that the act of policing is how a participant makes a language policy (and thus, the ideology that supports that policy) relevant within the space of an interaction. This view helps us understand dominant notions of language policing (e.g., "Speak English, this is America") as more complex than one participant being racist or discriminatory toward another participant within the bounded space of a one-time event. Rather, the "policer" is engaging in a practice of ideology that serves to create, replicate, or define some larger context. Therefore, we might consider language policing as a scalar act (Blommaert 2007) that serves to position the interaction within a specific context or space.

Scales might be considered as the "relevant notion of understandability" (Blommaert et al. 2015), or the context in which signs are best understood based on shared context and understanding (Blommaert 2007; Carr and Lempert 2016). Importantly, scales can cross spatial or temporal boundaries. Regarding spatial scales, scholars have examined the strong connection between competing notions of place as they relate to ideologies of linguistic appropriateness (Henry 2021). In many language policing interactions, participants will specifically reference place to draw what they perceive to be the relevant linguistic boundaries for a given interaction. However, place is a flexible category, and this can lead to competing notions of relevant scale. To use a particularly illustrative example from the Corpus of Linguistic Discrimination in Interaction (Raymond et al., forthcoming), consider a patron of a Californian restaurant who is upset that the menu is in Spanish. He complains to the cashier that "we aren't in Mexico, we're in America." This act sets the appropriate scale for the interaction at the national level. However, a bystander argues back: "But you came *here* to get tacos, bro." The bystander now contests that the relevant scale is the more localized one: it's not strange to see Spanish on the menu because this is a Mexican restaurant. Thus, we see that while language policing functions as a scalar act, the relative flexibility of place means that competing notions of scale are still present. Thus, the interpretative flexibility of scale can create a communicative ambiguity that can be leveraged to obfuscate hegemonic ideologies and practices by scale jumping to the level of the interaction.

Organizations as Sites of Ideology

In conceptualizing how participants collaboratively construct organizational contexts and imbue them with ideologies, I draw on literature from the field of organizational communication. Historically, much work on organizing and organizations has taken a “top-down” approach that centers the organization as a relatively static, preexisting entity (Taylor and Van Every 2000). However, that view ignores much of what we know to be true today in how organization members construct said organization through communication (Taylor and Van Every 2000; Cooren et al. 2011). In this “bottom-up” approach, members of an organization create, design, and change an organization through interaction and through communication practices. Moreover, we can see that not only are organizations formed in communication but also that specific events within those spaces are constructed by the interaction of participants (Heritage and Clayman 2010). For example, a company is created by the discourse and communications of its workforce, and individual meetings within this company are established by *how* attendees modulate their behavior to make the context of “a meeting.” Therefore, we see that the interaction becomes a critical space of analysis for understanding the establishment of an organization.

In the interaction that is the focus of this article, we can see from the outset that it can be considered “organizational” as the participants reference their positions in the organization. (All data presented in this article were transcribed by the author using Jeffersonian [Jefferson 2004] conventions.)

Transcript 1

1	UZM	Hi (.) I’m Uzma: (.) and this is Dia *(Camera pans over)*
2		(0.5)
3	DIA	Hi.*(waves at camera, camera pans back)*
4	UZM	We own Cannoli: an:d we were bored (.) so we would like to
5		introduce you to our team. *(turns to face away from camera)*
6		Owai:s (.) is our manager. *(Camera pans to OWS)*
7		(1.0)
8	OWS	Hi. *(to camera)*

The video begins with the two owners of the café, UZM and DIA, introducing themselves with their organizational roles, immediately making these identities relevant to whatever will follow. In line 4, UZM specifically names the organization ("Cannoli"), and she goes on to introduce the audience to their team. This introduction is framed as the overall purpose of the video in lines 4 and 5, so the recording is framed as a promotional, "behind-the-scenes" view of the café. In line 6, the camera pans over to Owais (OWS in later lines), designated as their manager, making the hierarchy of the participant identities ("owner" versus "manager") clearly visible. These first few lines make the organizational link clear, but they also show how the participants orient to the performative aspect of the interaction. They know they are being filmed, and they clearly orient to the camera as it pans between the participants. This helps situate the interaction that will follow as something produced for the organization's social media account, and thus part of its overarching image and brand.

The use of social media sites has been linked to neoliberal, capitalist notions of market forces, with both individuals and organizations curating content to appeal to specific audiences (Chouliaraki 2010). As the video was originally uploaded to the restaurant's Instagram profile, we can understand this interaction as occurring—at least in part—for the benefit or amusement of the customers who follow the restaurant's account. Thus, we might frame the stances and ideologies put forth in the video as appealing to the consumers who share the same ideas. In the following section of the recording, we see that the interaction begins to orient more overtly to the unnamed audience.

Transcript 2

9	UZM	Owai:s- (.)*(laughter off-screen, Dia?)* good. (.) Uh:: Dia
10		would you like to ask him a few questions.= *(Camera pans to*
11		*Dia)*
12	DIA	=Owais how long have you been working for us.
13	OWS	Uh:: I think (.) last nine year.
14	DIA	Ni:ne yea:rs=
15	OWS	=yeah.
16	DIA	*(to camera)* Owais was one of our first hires when we opened
17		uhm:: (.) Café Soul.
18	OWS	Yeah:.

This section of the interaction builds on the organizational context that came before it, but more importantly, it serves to set up a question-and-answer format for the rest of the interaction. In lines 9–10, UZM prompts DIA to begin asking questions. After OWS answers the first question in line 13, DIA goes on to explain to the camera giving further context regarding their professional relationship. This all serves to further reinforce the performative aspect of the interaction as this question is seemingly asked and then answered for the purpose of the audience, indicated by DIA's positioning in line 16. Moreover, UZM's framing in lines 9–10 serve to cue the audience that OWS is the one to pay attention to as the format mimics that of an interview. By shaping the interaction into an audience-oriented spectacle, the owners make a recording that allows them to not only achieve the stated goal of "introducing the team" but also craft a specific brand to advertise their restaurant.

In situating this interaction within a capitalist orientation to potential customers, I begin to draw a link between the organization and enduring colonial ideologies. In their book *Language, Capitalism, Colonialism: Toward a Critical History*, Monica Heller and Bonnie McElhinny (2017) describe the multifaceted ways in which capitalism, colonialism, and language intersect in creating and reinforcing social hegemonies across history. Similar to Tupas (2019), Heller and McElhinny argue that the overlapping systems of colonialism and capitalism function together in shaping how linguistic practices have been viewed and valued in various global context. Across disciplines, other scholars have also drawn connections between contemporary global capitalism and legacies of colonialism, arguing that capitalist structures built on colonial logics (Mignolo 2007; Quijano 2007) reinforce hegemonic whiteness. Scholars like cultural anthropologist Sherry Ortner (2006) argue that discourses of race and ethnicity are strongly linked to capitalist categories of socioeconomic class. Moreover, scholars of organization and labor have drawn explicit lineages from the colonial practice of slavery to contemporary management practices that are applied and advocated for in various global contexts (Rosenthal 2018).

Experts in colonialty and race who affirm the relationship between class and race in postcolonial contexts argue that "whiteness" is not strictly about phenotypically "white" actors but is instead related to ideologies of power and personhood. Walcott (2014) discusses the ways in which postcolonial spaces in Africa, as well as among Indigenous groups of Canada, whiteness is enacted by racialized people positioning themselves within repurposed colonial structures. Indeed, Walcott and other scholars think of "whiteness" as a constantly negotiated hegemonic hierarchy (Ahmed 2007; Twine and Gallagher 2008) that incorporates logics of race but also allows for various structural imbalances of power. As participants insert and position themselves within contemporary manifestations of colonial logics, whiteness is an ever-present aspirational goal (Fanon [1952] 1986) that continually creates uneven distributions of agency and autonomy, even in contexts without any "white people" (Walcott 2014).

These constraints, driven by access to capital or other resources, determine who can and cannot occupy positions of whiteness in a space. Returning to the organization as a site of ideology, we can consider the hierarchical structure by which members who are higher in the organization exert power and control over the lifeworlds of people lower in the hierarchy in ways that allow them to occupy structural whiteness. Considering the relationship between business owner and business manager that exists between UZM/DIA and OWS, we can consider the owners as occupying the institutional position of whiteness, a position that becomes clear when they engage in an act of language policing.

The Interaction at Cannoli

I have collected all data from publicly available social media sites. The interaction between UZM, DIA, and OWS is part of the Corpus of Language Discrimination in Interaction (Raymond et al., forthcoming), which collects various recordings of public language policing and discrimination. The corpus focuses on relatively recent incidents in the United States but contains interactions across different contexts. While the original recording of this specific interaction is not available on the restaurant's Instagram profile, the video has been copied onto several other sites as the initial post received moderate media attention. I have analyzed the interaction using methods from discourse analysis (Johnstone 2018) to focus on the ways in which the interactants frame themselves, their relationships to one another, and the specific language ideologies at play. While I am not Pakistani, my analysis of the interaction is informed by previous fieldwork and research in South Asia. To contextualize the interaction, I have compared it to other Instagram posts from the Cannoli restaurant account to understand what sort of content is normally uploaded for digital audience members. Some posts are examined later in the piece, along with criticisms from Pakistani viewers.

While not every interaction is so clearly tied to the constitution of an organization, the connection between the organization at large and this specific interaction is made very transparent. The participants referenced the name of the organization and organizational roles in transcript 1, and we see an employee being interpellated as a participant in the video, reinforcing the hierarchy of the organization. Following transcripts 1 and 2, the next section of the interaction is the first example where we see language competency brought up. Following the question-and-answer format in transcript 2, DIA asks OWS about his experience in learning English.

Transcript 3

20	DIA	And how many classes have you taken for English.
21	OWS	Uh:: I think uh: (.) three.
22	DIA	Three: I-
23	UZM	Three YEars, you mean=
24	OWS	=no no=
25	DIA	=Three whole cours[es]
26	OWS	[(It was)] six month one class.
27		(0.5)
28	UZM	Six mont[hs] one class
29	OWS	[Yeah] Yeah
30	DIA	So a year and a half=

In this piece of the transaction, DIA asks OWS in line 20 "how many classes have you taken for English." OWS responds appropriately in the next line by responding "I think uh three," but UZM tries to correct him in line 23 by claiming "Three years, you mean." First, OWS's answer implies that he did not have an English-medium education, indexing class and social power in the Pakistani context, but it also serves to set up the next part of the interaction where he is asked to "say a sentence" in English. UZM's repair in line 23 could signal that there a misunderstanding or that there is some other motivation for correcting him. UZM might be asserting that OWS has phrased his response incorrectly or that he misunderstood the original question. In either case, UZM's phrasing as a declarative (as opposed to "Do you mean three years?") would indicate that she believes she is the one who knows the truth of the situation, putting her in a more authoritative position. This is similar to DIA's "teacherly" moves in transcript 4 that could potentially position her as having authority over OWS or as being a more encouraging figure.

Transcript 4

33	UZM	So could you please speak to: (0.3) *(gestures to camera)*
34		everyone in English and say a sentence *(Car horn outside)*
35		(2.0)
36	DIA	>[Intro]duce yourself.<
37	OWS	[My n-]
38		(1.5)
39	OWS	*(gaze continually shifts between camera and DIA/UZM)* Hi: my
40		name is Owais Aftab (.) an:d I- (.) uh: job there uh:
41		manager (.) and, *(palms up gesture)*
42	UNK	and= *(sounds like DIA and UZM together)*
43	OWS	=that's it. *(palms up gesture)*
44	DIA	Sha:bash *(to OWS)*
		Well done

This section of the interaction is framed as being the purpose of the recording. In line 33, UZM instructs OWS to "speak to everyone in English and say a sentence." Her mention of "everyone" and direct gesture to the camera indicate that this is the true performance that the interaction has been leading up to. UZM's command also gives away her underlying language ideology: whatever OWS has been doing in the recorded interaction up to this point (we do not know what took place before the start of the recording), she does not see it as constituting "speaking English" or "saying a sentence," even though OWS has successfully communicated in English in lines 8, 13, 15, and 18 of transcripts 1 and 2. Following the terms from Irvine and Gal (2000), this would constitute a clear case of erasure, as OWS's past communicative ability is not acknowledged in UZM's linguistic ideology. Her emphasis on "say" and "sentence," would seem to strengthen her stance that OWS is not capable of performing the task. Neither DIA nor OWS challenge this attitude, and as OWS obliges in lines 39–41, his continually shifting gaze indicates that he understands this to be a performance for both a digital and physical audience.

Through her actions, DIA positions herself as a sort of teacher to OWS. Jean Wong and Hansun Zhang Waring's (2009, 2020) work on second-language pedagogy and non-native speakers shows that instructors will often produce these more specific commands (e.g., "introduce yourself," "describe your family," "talk about a hobby") to elicit speech from language learners. Furthermore, in line 44, DIA produces the only non-English utterance in the recording with the Urdu *shabash* (excellent), and her gaze to OWS indicates this is designed specifically for him. Providing these kinds of evaluations following elicited speech is another common technique among language teachers (Wong and Wharing 2009). While it's unclear what DIA's motivations are, her turn designs position her as having knowledge and authority over the validity of OWS's speech. She positions herself similarly to native-level language instructors, aligning herself with English and its sociocultural connotations of "upper-classness" and institutional whiteness.

In the final piece of the interaction, UZM and DIA make clear their ideology connecting English fluency and financial compensation.

Transcript 5

45	UZM	*(to camera)* So: this is (.) ou:r manager who's been with
46		u(h)s f(h)or nine years *(DIA laughing)* (.) this is the
47		beautiful English he speaks. We just th[ought-
48	DIA	[this is what we

Transcript 5 (*continued*)

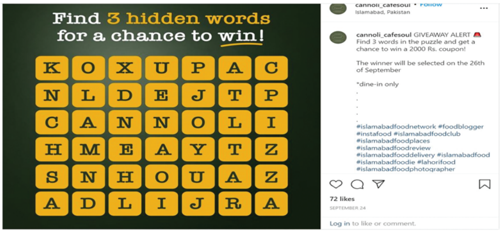
49		pai:d for= *(laughs)*
50	DIA	=This is- a::t (.) a very good salary mind you. (.) Thank
51		you.

In these lines, UZM and DIA both return their attention to the camera, effectively ending OWS's participation in the interaction. In lines 45–47, we see both UZM and DIA laugh, and this informs us that her utterance in line 47 regarding OWS's "beautiful English" is sarcastic. This reframes the interaction, and specifically OWS's participation, as something that has occurred not only for imbuing the café's online brand with the socially relevant connotations of valuing "good English" but also for the amusement of the two owners. This conclusion is supported by the initial framing of the interaction in line 4 of transcript 1, where UZM explains how the two owners "were bored." The incident reinforces the organizational hierarchy as it shows how OWS (and ostensibly any other manager) can be called on by the owners to suit their whims. Furthermore, UZM and DIA reference the salary that is given to OWS for being a manager, in ways that imply he is overpaid given his perceived lack of English competency. In line 48, DIA interjects during UZM's turn to exclaim "this is what we paid for" before she continues laughing, and UZM's emphasis on "very" in line 50 would indicate that she thinks OWS receives a higher salary than what might be indicated given her perception of his performance. Returning to the framework of Irvine and Gal (2000), this conceptualization of "well-paidness" as belonging to speakers of English is fractal recursivity: consider the division between English colonizers and the colonized peoples of Pakistan, with the recursion drawing a distinction between Anglophone and non-Anglophone Pakistanis, and at each tier, wealth belongs to the "more English" category. OWS is framed as an exception in this ideology: he doesn't speak English well according to UZM and DIA, but he is well paid. We might consider this self-positioning as arbiters of worth, value, and competency as UZM and DIA occupying the institutional space of whiteness. Finally, she closes the interaction by addressing the audience with "thank you," reinforcing the notion that this was all done for the benefit of some unknown virtual audience.

Social Media Criticism and Response

The production of this performance for an organizational social media account frames this as part of the "brand." It becomes clear that the organization is co-constructed with a language ideology that values English and its connotations of wealth in the Pakistani context, reflecting English-centric values of coloniality. UZM and DIA make their colonial attitudes clear in how they link English with pay, and there is no reference to any other competencies (linguistic or otherwise) that OWS might possess. This paints a picture in which English ability—which is laden with connotations of whiteness, class, and colonial logics of modernity—overrides any other relevant skills, to at the detriment of the linguistic identities of OWS and potentially other employees of the café. This practice resonates with work by Rusty Barrett (2006), who examined how an English-centric policy served to divide English-speaking owners and Spanish-speaking workers in a Texas restaurant. In both cases, the owners focus on English as the relevant language for the organization, and this leads to a reinforcement of the managerial hierarchy at the expense of the non-Anglophone workers. Thus, we see that language is an organizationally constitutive practice that can uphold colonial ideologies about class, work, and personhood.

The advent of social media and hypervisible branding practices have made these acts of language perceptible to extremely broad audiences. This English-first language ideology has often been communicated by Cannoli in their other social media posts. For example, a picture from the Cannoli Instagram account shows a clear preference for English-speaking customers (fig. 1). The text of this post is entirely in English, along with several English hashtags. The image entreats the audience to find three hidden words in a puzzle made up of English letters, with the word *Cannoli* being clearly visible in the middle row of letters. This interactive post necessarily orients to an audience that reads English and has the capacity to solve a puzzle founded entirely on English words. The text explains that participants might win a prize (2,000 Pakistani rupees, roughly US$11) that can be redeemed at the restaurant, demonstrating how the owners of Cannoli are trying to cultivate a customer base that speaks English. Thus, the organization's ideology that highly valorizes English extends to the customers as well as the employees, interpellating the audience into the underlying colonial practice.



Find 3 hidden words
for a chance to win!

K	O	X	U	P	A	C
N	L	D	E	J	T	P
C	A	N	N	O	L	I
H	M	E	A	Y	T	Z
S	N	H	O	U	A	Z
A	D	L	I	J	R	A

cannoli_cafesoul • Follow
Islamabad, Pakistan

cannoli_cafesoul GIVEAWAY ALERT 🚨
Find 3 words in the puzzle and get a chance to win a 2000 Rs. coupon!

The winner will be selected on the 26th of September

*dine-in only
.
.
.
.
.
#islamabadfoodnetwork #foodblogger #instafood #islamabadfoodclub #islamabadfoodplaces #islamabadfoodreview #islamabadfooddelivery #islamabadfood #islamabadfoodie #lahorifood #islamabadfoodphotographer

72 likes
SEPTEMBER 24

Log in to like or comment.

Figure 1. Cannoli promotion (Cannoli by Café Soul 2021)

Despite this call for audience ratification of an ideology that values English, viewers have lambasted the recorded interaction discussed in this article. Social media commenters have accused UZM and DIA of bullying their manager and abusing their position as owners. Furthermore, a handful of responses highlight the broader institutional structures of classism and perduring colonial logics. For example, a YouTuber named Shaloom Alfred (2021) discusses the interaction as displaying the "English-Gora" complexes of the two owners, who he describes as needing to show how Westernized they are in relation to their managers. Alfred draws a link between the owners' attitudes around English and the colonial desire to be seen as "Western" and, thus, as taking part in modernity. Strikingly, Alfred uses the word *Gora*, which is an Urdu demonym for describing a light-skinned person, so we can see that the racial politics at play here are salient for a Pakistani audience. In a second, more illustrative example, the comedians Ali Gul Pir and Akbar Chaudry parody the interaction (Desi George 2021), introducing themselves as "Uzma and Kaisa Dia" (pronounced like *quesadilla*) before they play out the rest of the interaction. Notably, the role of OWS is not played by a Pakistani man but rather by a white British man named George who speaks English as his first language. Moreover, the English used by Uzma and Kaisa Dia carries an exaggerated Urdu accent that differs from either comedian's normal accent. These differences aside, there is an exacting attention to detail in how the trio lampoon the original interaction, as shown in figures 2 and 3.

In the parody, George is dressed similarly to OWS, including his suit jacket and mask. He also holds his hands clasped in front of his torso throughout most of the parody. Despite his physical whiteness and standard British English, the interaction here proceeds exactly as before: Uzma and Kaisa Dia laugh at George, mock his "beautiful English," and position themselves as the arbiters of value in the interaction. While the parody does not overtly bring up the topics of colonialism, class, or race, we can see Uzma and Kaisa Dia's performance as making a point about organizational hierarchy and the power that is granted to owners, who occupy the enduring colonial position of institutional whiteness. Indeed, others have attributed aspects of whiteness to UZM and DIA, including labeling them as "Karens," an epithet that is typically attributed to white women with elitist or racist attitudes (Williams 2020). Thus, while physical whiteness is not present in the original interaction, the online audience still perceives the two owners as somehow performing whiteness, in addition to their upper-class identities. Returning to the notion of scale, many critiques of this interaction read it within a scale of postcolonial Pakistan, taking the attitudes and ideologies displayed by UZM, DIA, and Cannoli at large to be best understood within the

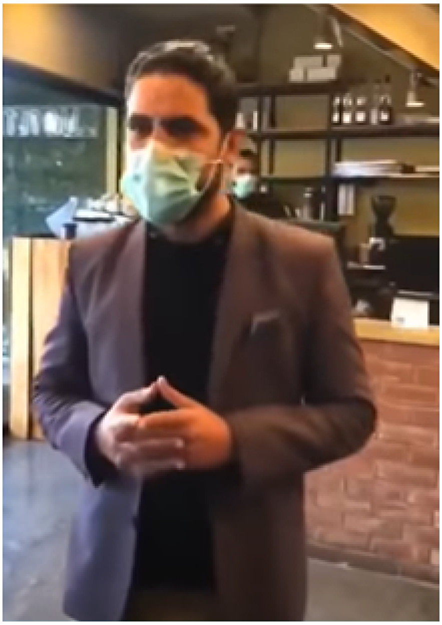


Figure 2. OWS as depicted in the original interaction (Taleem-e-Balighan 2021)

contemporary social issues surrounding English, its colonial legacy, and its capitalist value within the country. However, the scalar aspect of language policing and the emergence of organizational contexts gives rise to conflicting interpretations of the interaction.

Indeed, this defense was enacted on the Cannoli Instagram account. In this post, Cannoli writes that the interaction was "misconstrued" by the public and actually depicts playful "banter with a team member" (fig. 4). The discursively reframes the interaction as a frivolous instance that just indicates closeness between employers and employees, jumping the relevant scale down to the organization, or even down to this specific interaction. The defense post seems to read that the backlash was unwarranted because the semiotic scale was misread, arguing that the interaction shouldn't be understood in the larger context of Pakistani language ideologies but rather through the lens of the unique organizational context of Cannoli. More generally, there is a "sufficient enough" lack of context, allowing UZM and DIA to claim that there was something vital that the audience just cannot know because the audience does not have the organizational scale of reference. This defense gives a smokescreen of plausible deniability—one that seems to have been somewhat effective considering the high number of "likes," as most posts on the restaurant's account have fewer than 100 likes.

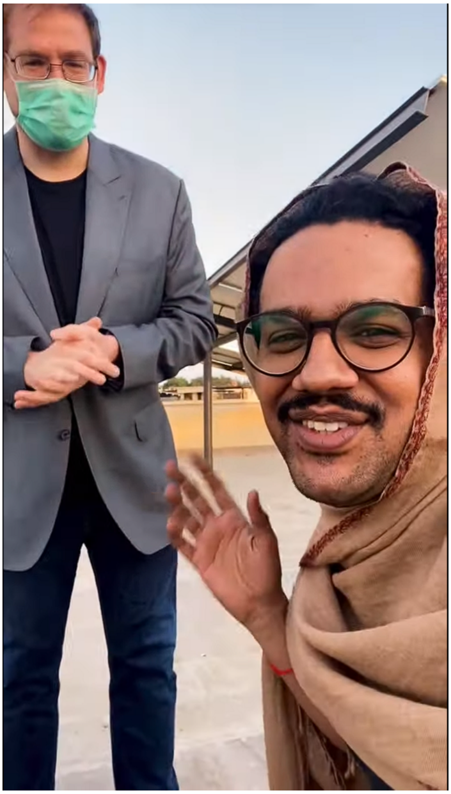
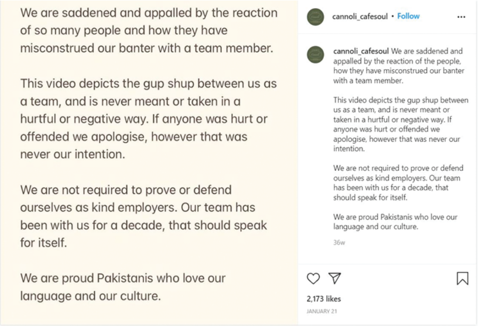


Figure 3. The parody featuring George and Kaisa Dia (Desi George 2021)



We are saddened and appalled by the reaction of so many people and how they have misconstrued our banter with a team member.

This video depicts the gup shup between us as a team, and is never meant or taken in a hurtful or negative way. If anyone was hurt or offended we apologise, however that was never our intention.

We are not required to prove or defend ourselves as kind employers. Our team has been with us for a decade, that should speak for itself.

We are proud Pakistanis who love our language and our culture.

cannoli_cafesoul We are saddened and appalled by the reaction of the people, how they have misconstrued our banter with a team member.

This video depicts the gup shup between us as a team, and is never meant or taken in a hurtful or negative way. If anyone was hurt or offended we apologise, however that was never our intention.

We are not required to prove or defend ourselves as kind employers. Our team has been with us for a decade, that should speak for itself.

We are proud Pakistanis who love our language and our culture.

36w

2,173 likes

JANUARY 21

Figure 4. Cannoli response (Cannoli by Café Soul 2021)

Conclusion

In this article, I have shown the ways in which contemporary attitudes surrounding class and the capitalist value of languages function as extensions of perduring colonial legacies, including structural hegemonies of race and power. Moreover, I have delineated the relative complexities regarding the scalar act of language policing and how conflicting notions of scale can serve to hide or obfuscate the colonial logics of these ideologies. While the interaction examined in this piece is quite illustrative, it serves as a single data point. I invite scholars across disciplines to use this work as a jumping off point for examining other global contexts across differing intersections of power, including gender, sexuality, religious identity, and so on, that continue to derive their legitimacy through entrenched and repurposed colonial structures.

As scholars continue the critical work of understanding the relationship between discourses of neoliberalism, race, and global capitalism, it is vital that we pay attention to how actors disguise these ideologies. Notions of spatiotemporal scale are just one semiotic process by which actors empowered by hegemonic hierarchies can obscure the complexities of power that continue to fuel inequalities across the globe. Leveraging an intersectional "both-and" approach as advocated by this special issue helps us more thoroughly interrogate the ways in which colonial logics are taken up and reshaped into modern organizations and societies.

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