



مدرسة المنتزة الانجليزية
PARK HOUSE ENGLISH SCHOOL

PART OF



International
Schools
Partnership

Perceptions of Home Language (HL) Status on HL Learning in KS2

Park House English School

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Research Questions

Main: To what extent does a student's perception of their home language's status affect how they rate the value of home language lessons in Key Stage 2?

Subsidiary: How does any observed relationship pertain to Urdu home language speakers in particular?

Rational

Context: Launched a new Home Languages (HL) initiative at Park House English School to align directly with our institutional *Multilingualism Roadmap*.

Observation: Students from European backgrounds actively make metalinguistic connections between their HL and other school subjects.

The Gap: Students from South Asian backgrounds (Pakistani/Indian/Sri Lankan cohorts) appear noticeably less motivated to draw these same linguistic links.

Linguistic Status Balance: Despite large student numbers, South Asian languages (Urdu is the largest HL at Park House) remain less visually promoted or heard across the parent body and wider school environment.

Rational

Theoretical Framework: Perceived institutional and social status heavily dictate a student's personal investment and language maintenance (*Schroedler, 2024*).

The Sociolinguistic Reality: South Asian languages like Urdu frequently hold an "ambivalent role"—highly valued for internal cultural identity, but displaced by English in formal or prestigious spheres (*Ashraf, 2023; Ali & Khan, 2024*).

Research Goal: Evaluate if these status hierarchies significantly impact student motivation during Key Stage 2 HL lessons.

Actionable Outcome: Determine if the school needs to implement targeted family outreach, increase language visibility, or revise support structures to actively elevate heritage language status.



Literature Review: Sociolinguistic Prestige & Institutional Hierarchies

Status Over Competence: Sociopolitical and prestige status of a minority language in wider society heavily dictates a child's long-term literacy investment (*Montrul, 2015*).

Elite vs. Heritage Divide: School environments can unintentionally signal hierarchies; European languages are often coded as high-prestige assets, while regional home languages are systemically minoritized (*Schroedler, 2024*).

The "Ambivalent" Language Profile: Significant tension exists in South Asian/Urdu contexts: languages are highly revered for intrinsic cultural identity, but rapidly displaced by English for formal, institutional currency and economic value (*Ashraf, 2023; Ali & Khan, 2024*).



Literature Review: Child Affect, Metalinguistic Awareness, & Lesson Valuation

Child Internalization: Primary school-aged children are acutely aware of sociolinguistic structures; they actively perceive which languages are "heard and promoted" around them (*Jean & Geva, 2012*).

Metalinguistic Links: High self-perceived status and confidence in a home language drive students to make active cross-linguistic connections during academic tasks (*Zhou & Liu, 2024*).

Motivation Deficit: Sensing that a language lacks formal prestige outside the home directly undermines a heritage speaker's motivational investment in formal lessons (*Montrul, 2010*).

Pedagogical Target: Understanding this intersection allows action researchers to design targeted interventions that explicitly counter societal prestige gaps within the school ecosystem (*Kondo-Brown, 2010*).

Methodology

Target Participants: 95 Year 5 & 6 students enrolled in Home Language (HL) lessons at Park House English School.

Instrument Selection: A customized 4-item questionnaire explicitly adapted from Zhou (2024) to evaluate child-centered affect over pure linguistic proficiency. Microsoft Forms was chosen because of familiarity and ethical considerations of data storage.

Psychometric Rigor: Scale items benefit from extensive foundational testing, satisfying strict Face validation (age-appropriateness), Content validation (expert panel alignment), and Construct validation (well-being indicators) criteria (Zhou, 2024).

Methodology

Target Domains: Items mapped cleanly to capture four essential dimensions of heritage learner experience (Zhou, 2024):

1. Enjoyment: "I look forward to my home language lessons."
2. Meaning: "When I learn this language, I feel closer to my family and relatives ."
3. Connectedness: "When I learn this language, I feel closer to my culture ."
4. Achievement/Proactive Well-being: "I feel proud of the progress I make in this language"

Scale Design: Forced-choice 4-point structure (*Never, Not very often, Most of the time, Always*) omitting a neutral midpoint to eliminate central tendency bias and "lazy ticking" (Dörnyei, 2003).

Developmental Delivery: Formulated with simplified, highly contextualized child-friendly language to ensure high validity for primary school students (McKay, 2006).

Methodology

Home Language Well-Being Survey



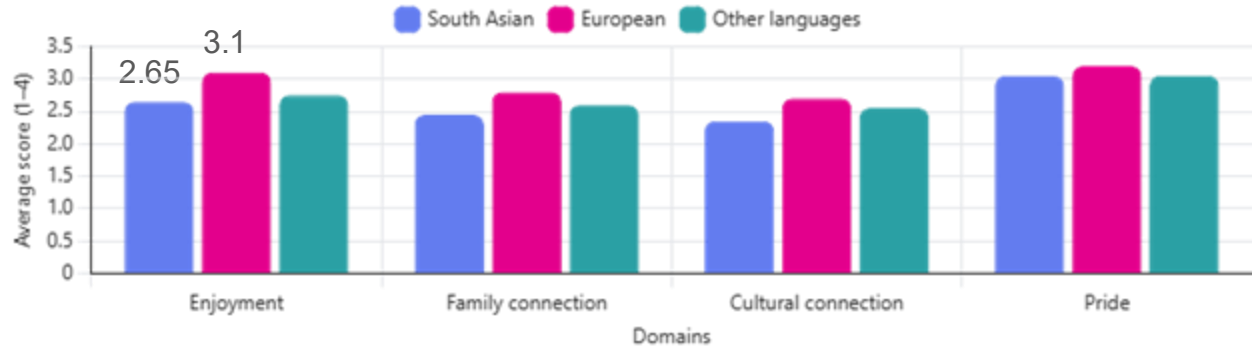
The Likert-Scale Interval Asymptotic Assumption: While an individual item is technically ordinal data, psychometric consensus establishes that a cluster of well-designed, linear Likert-type items behaves like an interval scale when aggregated (Phakiti, 2013). This interval behavior formally justifies calculating arithmetic means (M) and running comparative metrics (like t-tests). The following linear scoring scale was used:

Response	Score
Never	1
Sometimes	2
Most of the time	3
Always	4

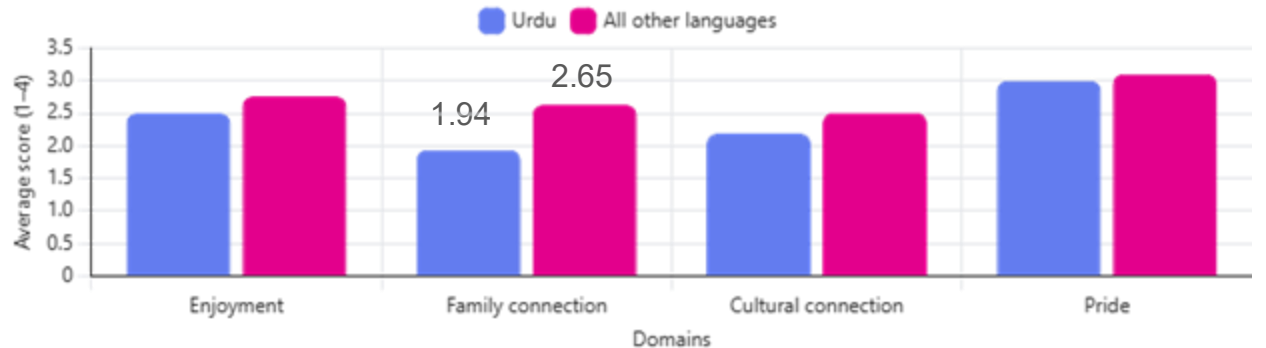
Findings

- 15% difference in *enjoyment*, but $p = 0.89$ on T-test.
Not statistically significant.

Comparison of Home Language Perceptions by Language Group



Urdu vs Other Languages: Student Perceptions



- 27% difference in *Family Connection*, and $p = 0.007$ on T-test.
Very statistically significant.



Findings

Clear hierarchy: European languages score highest across all measures, whilst South Asian languages score lowest. This pattern supports the idea that perceived language status influences how students value home language learning.

Strongest effect (family connection): Urdu-speaking students report significantly lower family connection ($M \approx 1.94$ vs 2.65 , $p = 0.0079$). This suggests that status differences are most strongly reflected in how students link their language to family identity.

Uneven impact across domains: Differences in enjoyment and cultural connection are smaller and not statistically significant. This indicates that the status effect is not uniform, but concentrated in specific aspects of the learner experience.

Consistently high pride: All groups report similarly high pride ($\sim 3.0+$), indicating that students feel successful in learning their language, even when they feel less connected to it.

Discussion

Linguistic Status Hierarchy: Data confirms a socio-emotional gap matching macro sociolinguistic hierarchies; European varieties score highest across all categories while South Asian languages score lowest, demonstrating that external prestige filters into our classrooms (*Schroedler, 2024*).

Identity-Language Separation: Interestingly, consistently high pride scores (3.0+) show that South Asian students retain a strong intrinsic personal link to their culture (*Ali & Khan, 2024*), despite experiencing somewhat lower engagement and connection within the formal school environment (*Montrul, 2010*).

Why This Matters to Schools: International schools cannot treat multilingualism as a uniform blanket; unchecked hierarchies create an uneven playing field where "elite multilingualism" is institutionally amplified, while large communities of heritage language speakers face implicit marginalisation and a drop in learning investment (*Ashraf, 2023*).

Park House Action Strategy: To actively counter this status gap, our school will try to take steps to encourage familial and community validation. We could initiate projects like an 'Urdu Family Film Night' to elevate language visibility, celebrate heritage capital, and further include parents with our alignment to the Multilingualism Roadmap.

Reflections About Research

Instrument Design Sensitivity: I learned that conducting action research with primary-aged learners requires an intentional move away from clinical or complex academic wording. Writing questionnaire headers and prompts requires extreme caution to avoid psychological priming or text anxiety (*Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010*).

Mitigating Response Bias: I realised the critical logistical value of optimising scale structures (like shifting to a 4-point forced-choice scale) to explicitly minimise satisficing, fence-sitting, and habitual ticking patterns among Year 5/6 students.

Empowering Practice Through Data: The most rewarding lesson was seeing how localised classroom data can directly affect abstract school policies, turning a simple survey into immediate community actions (like our Urdu film night initiative).

Limitations

Localised Context & Sample Scale: As a focused piece of action research, the sample size is restricted to 95 Year 5 & 6 students within a single school environment. While highly valuable for local intervention, findings cannot necessarily be generalised across different key stages or diverse international school networks.

Exclusively Subjective Metrics: The instrument captures child-centered affect, internalisation of status, and perceived well-being (*Zhou, 2024*). It does not triangulate these self-reported views with objective home language literacy assessments or formal classroom behavioral observations.

Socio-Linguistic Broad Categorization: Grouping highly diverse student populations into macro-cohorts (e.g., "South Asian" background vs. "European" background) handles data cleanly for a presentation but risks masking distinct dialectal variations or specific home literacy environments.

Social Desirability Risk: Although using age-appropriate, child-friendly delivery mechanics (*McKay, 2006*), primary-aged learners completing a questionnaire in a school environment remain susceptible to a baseline response bias. They may implicitly select options they perceive as "correct" or pleasing to school authorities.

Looking Forward

Implement the Strategic Interventions: Launch the community advocacy initiatives next term, starting directly with our scheduled ‘Urdu Family Film Night’ to elevate community language visibility.

Re-Survey and Track Long-Term Trends: Re-administer the adapted *Language Lesson Affect Scale* at the end of the next academic cycle to empirically trace shifts in student motivation and check the direct impact of our school-wide interventions.

Conduct Action Research Advocacy: Lead short, collaborative professional development sessions for core classroom teachers at Park House English School, sharing our findings to build whole-staff capacity for identifying and dismantling hidden language prestige boundaries.

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