Title of Project:
A Narrative Ethnography of Teachers’ Language Perceptions, Preferences, and Practices in a Multilingual Context, and its Implications for Language-in-Education Policy and Planning

Researcher:
Aziz Khan
University of Auckland, New Zealand
akha125@aucklanduni.ac.nz

Research Supervisor:
Dr. Gary Barkhuizen
University of Auckland, New Zealand
g.barkhuizen@auckland.ac.nz

Project Summary:
Ethnography of language policy (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007) – a 21st century approach to researching Language Policy and Planning (Johnson & Ricento, 2013) – emphasizes the centrality of teachers’ language perceptions and practices (Valdiviezo, 2013) in understanding the role of their agency (García & Menken, 2010) in bottom-up transformation of language policy (Canagarajah, 2006) through its micro-level appropriation (Ricento, 2006). This project is a narrative ethnography conducted in three rural primary schools in northwest Pakistan. The three schools are located close to each other but follow different languages as medium of instruction (MoI): English, the official and most sought after language; Urdu, the national language; and Pashto, the indigenous language of the area where the study is based.

Drawing mainly on extensive narrative interviews with six participants (two teachers from each school) and observations of their classrooms, the study aims to unpeel the language policy onion (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996) and slice it ethnographically (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007) to explore how teachers use their agency to evolve policies based on local conditions. The study investigates what language ideologies the teachers have, which languages they prefer as subjects and MoI at primary level education, which languages they actually use for teaching in the three schools, why they make these choices, and what implications their decisions have for macro-level language-in-education policy. It also intends to explore how contextual factors, including cultural, political and economic, influence their choice of languages. In general, the project aims to contribute to our understanding of the complex language-in-education policy processes at play on the ground in rural Pakistan.