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## Using Semi-structured Interviews in Qualitative Research: A Case of the Maintenance of Social Order in the Linguistic Landscape of Islamabad, Pakistan

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**Abstract:** Qualitative research uses several techniques to collect data, and interviews top the list. The current research will shed light on using semi-structured interviews in linguistic landscape studies. Linguistic landscape is the visibility of languages in public spaces (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). This study examined how social order is maintained through public signboards in eight public areas in the linguistic landscape of Islamabad, including two parks, two hospitals, two shopping malls, and the city airport and railway station. Following (Schiffrin et al., 2001), linguistic structures 'beyond the sentence' were examined by analyzing the interview data obtained from eight local people and eight authorities. The authorities believed they could not maintain social order due to how the common people behaved in public areas, blaming the local people for not following public signboards. It elucidated their power as authorities. The local people, on the other hand, believed there was an excess of negation on signboards, which inclines them even more to disregard what is written on signboards. Conclusively, this study can help to bridge the communication gap between the authorities and common people in Pakistan. The study recommends revising language used on public signboards to reduce harsh wording, favoring positive expressions.

**Key Words:** Qualitative Research, Semi-structured Interviews, Social Order, Public Signboards, Language and Power, Linguistic Landscape

### Introduction

The present study aimed to examine the condition of social order in public institutions in the linguistic landscape of Pakistan. Social order is a concept that can have various interpretations in various societies, as its meaning is dependent on the context in which it is being talked about. Social order is generally implemented by the government of a country. *Human Nature and the Social Order* (Cooley, 1983) defines social order as something extracted from humans themselves. He puts forward his views by saying, "Social order cannot be imposed from outside human nature but that it arises from the self." This means that the government should impose social order while keeping in mind the people for whom it is being designed.

In the current study, the imposition and maintenance of social order were explored through the mediational means of public signboards, using the lens of mediated discourse analysis as the theoretical framework. This research on the maintenance of social order in the linguistic landscape of Pakistan was multi-faceted and had three major parts. The first part focused on the maintenance of social order through public signboards, whose findings have already been published by the author. The current study focuses on the second and third parts of this research, in which the data was collected via semi-structured interviews, with the focus on direct contact with people on whom social order is imposed by the authorities.

### Literature Review

This research discusses the situation of social order and how it is implemented by the authorities through the medium of signboards, the broad area of research on this topic falls under the discourse of language and power. According to Weber (2009), power is "the ability of an individual or group to achieve their goals

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or aims when others are trying to prevent them from realizing them" (p. 21). One can say that it is one's possession of control, authority, or influence over others. This possession of 'power to control' of the ruling authority will be observed in the present study. The issue of power exertion through the use of language has been studied previously as well but through different domains, e.g., academic setting, medical setting, institutional setting, and so on. The current research will explore the issue of language and power in the setting of public institutions.

(Fairclough, 2013, p. 46) states, "Power in discourse has to do with powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants." If a person has command over people's minds and acts through their discourse, it helps them to exhibit power over them. Therefore, power accrues to verbal interaction and is determined by the institutional role and speakers' socio-economic status, gender or ethnic identity, and so on. The current study observed the phenomenon of language and power as showcased on public signboards. Investigating signboards to explore language and its current discourses is a very contemporary area of research in applied linguistics (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008), which comes under the linguistic landscape. Linguistic landscape studies involve analyzing the written words around us, be it in the form of signboards, graffiti, wall chalking, and even writings on dresses worn by people in public. The linguistic landscape helps to discover emerging patterns of society, social identities, and roles, and it tells how language is reforming with time and circumstances. It also reflects on how language is being used to exert power through new mediums (Rowland, 2013). Linguistic landscape represents the decor of public life, and it carries emblematic significance. The linguistic landscape is an interesting phenomenon that uncovers social realities. It can be used to observe and analyze the changing trends and discourses in a given territory (Sebba, 2010).

As mentioned earlier, examining the language of signboards was the primary focus of this research, but the current paper sheds light on insights obtained by interviewing the local community and the authorities who make them.

## Problem Statement

It has been observed that there exists a communication gap between the authorities and the common people of Pakistan. By conducting interviews with the local people and the authorities in the selected public areas, the researcher has revealed the communication gap that is present between the authorities and the local people. There is a need for proper channeling of ideas between the authorities and local people. The voice of the local people as to how public signboards should be designed can be communicated to the authorities through a medium like a mobile application, which can act as a 'people's voice.' It will consequently help the sign makers restructure the language and design of the signboards so that they fulfill the role they are made for.

Although Pakistan is a democratic state, one can observe a strong sense of exertion of power when it comes to 'control' of people. The topic of this study is related to language and power. This means, more specifically, how the authorities try to exhibit power and maintain social order among people through the use of 'language' on public signboards. Studies show that there exists a deeply embedded relationship between language and power in discourse (Fairclough, 2013). Thus, this study adds a new perspective on language and power studies (Fairclough, 2013) did it and analyzes how the government uses its power to exercise social control over people. Therefore, it can be seen that the maintenance of social order via the language used on public signboards is an area worth exploring.

## Research Questions

Research questions of the present research were formulated based on (Schiffrin et al. (2001). As quoted by (Biber et al., 2007, p. 1) in their introduction to *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* divided discourse analysis into three categories:

- The study of language use,
- The study of linguistic structure 'beyond the sentence' and
- The study of social practices and ideological assumptions that are associated with language and/ or communication.



On the basis of these categories, the following were the three research questions:

- Q 1:** How are linguistic structures on public signboards playing a part in maintaining social order in the linguistic landscape of Pakistan?
- Q 2:** What do linguistic structures beyond the sentence imply about the construction of social order through public signboards in the linguistic landscape of Pakistan?
- Q 3:** How can the maintenance of social order through public signboards be analyzed in terms of the discourse of language and power in a Pakistani setting?

The current paper will reveal the findings of research questions two and three.

## Significance of the Study

This research is important for the researchers in the field of applied linguistics and, more specifically, linguistic landscape and discourse analysis, as they can gain a deeper knowledge of the ways language could be used as a tool for exercising power. It also gives valuable insights into the linguistic situation of a given place (Pakistan, in this case). Through this study, readers will learn about the power relations between the authorities and the common people of Pakistan via the power showcased on public signboards.

## Research Methodology

The current research is qualitative in design, as it involves analyzing data qualitatively, i.e., "the data consisting of words, views, opinions, and responses" (Creswell, 2009). This study focused on the social actors involved in making these signboards, i.e., the authorities of the selected public institutions as well as the opinions of local people. Mediated discourse analysis (Scollon, 2003) has been applied to the data as the theoretical framework, where the researcher looked at the data amidst the nexus of politics, power relations, the social action communicated through public signboards, and the perception of people.

Mediated discourse analysis (MDA) observes the relationship between discourse and action. (Scollon & Scollon, 2003) contemplates, "We can only fully interpret the meaning of public texts by considering the social and physical world that surrounds them" (p. 132). They further illustrated that the meaning of discourse lies not only in the text itself but also in the action that people are compelled to take due to that text. For example, a public road sign reading 'Do not overtake from the left' could coerce middle-aged drivers to comply immediately, while it could make newbie teen-aged drivers not follow the rules. Thus, if one has to analyze such signboards, one has to also look at the actions that the readers take after reading such signboards. (Scollon & Scollon, 2003) rightly said, "We live our lives within elaborate socially constructed worlds of discourse and social interaction" (p. 16).

Data for the current study was taken from eight public areas in the capital of Pakistan, Islamabad. They are referred to as survey areas in linguistic landscape studies. The names of the survey areas are given in Table 1. These were two public hospitals, two public parks, two shopping malls, the airport, and the railway station.

**Table 1**

*Survey Areas of Data Collection*

Type of Public Institution	Survey Areas
Hospitals	1. Benazir Bhutto Hospital
	2. Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences Islamabad
Parks	3. F9 Park Islamabad
	4. Lake View Park Islamabad
Shopping malls	5. Centaurus Mall
	6. Safa Gold Mall
Airport	7. Islamabad International Airport
Railway Station	8. Islamabad Railway Station

The researcher gathered data by:

1. Conducting interviews (8 in total)
2. Conducting interviews with the authorities of the survey areas (8 in total)

## Conducting Interviews

The first type of data collection was achieved through conducting interviews. The opinions of local people visiting the selected survey areas were obtained, and similarly, interviews with the authorities of these public institutions were also conducted. These interviews were conducted in order to complement the other data collection techniques, which elicited information directly from the participants related to public signboards in Pakistan. Thus, semi-structured interview questions acted as one of the instruments of data collection for this study. Semi-structured interviews are such in which "a researcher asks informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions" (Ayres, 2008, p. 810). They are "conducted on the basis of a loose structure consisting of open-ended questions that define what is to be explored" (Britten, 1995, p. 51). A sample of the interview questions is included in Appendix B and C.

Interviews are regarded as the most common data collection technique in qualitative studies "in which a researcher and the participants in his/her study engage in a conversation which focuses on the research study questions" (DeMarrais, 2004; Merriam, 2009). Moreover, "interviews yield direct quotations from people about their experience, opinions, feelings, and knowledge" (Patton, 2002, p. 4). One person from each site was randomly selected, and interviews were conducted with them, which resulted in a total of eight participants. The profile of the local participants is given in Table 2 below.

**Table 2**

*Profile of the Local Participants*

No.	Gender	Age	Profession
Participant 1	Male	26	Engineer
Participant 2	Female	32	Housewife
Participant 3	Male	36	PhD student
Participant 4	Male	36	University lecturer
Participant 5	Male	30	College student
Participant 6	Male	25	Doctor
Participant 7	Female	32	Housewife
Participant 8	Female	28	School Teacher

Interviews were also conducted with the authorities of all the eight survey areas. The authorities were contacted, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with them. Each interview was 20–25 minutes long. The profile of the participants representing the authorities of the public institutions is given in Table 3 below.

**Table 3**

*Profile of the Authorities*

No.	Public institution	Gender	Age	Post in the public institution
Participant 1	Airport	Male	58	Deputy General Manager, Admin
Participant 2	Railway Station	Male	30	Ticket collector and manager in Admin
Participant 3	BB Hospital	Male	55	Store in-charge
Participant 4	PIMS Hospital	Male	45	Storekeeper, Admin
Participant 5	F9 Park	Male	40	Park manager
Participant 6	Lake View Park	Male	38	Park manager
Participant 7	Centaurus Mall	Male	35	Head of Department (leasing and marketing)
Participant 8	Safa Gold Mall	Male	32	Manager Marketing

## Research Findings of the Interviews Conducted with the Local People

A thematic approach was used by the researcher for analysis, where after reading and rereading, the data was coded. The reason for using a thematic approach was that the data was not very large, complex or multimodal, so it was better to analyze the emerging themes by hand rather than using software. After reading the transcript, six themes were identified by the researcher as follows:

1. Interest in reading public signboards, their importance, and functions



2. Observance of signboards by the public
3. Features of a public signboard
4. Maintenance of social order through public signboards
5. Improvements suggested in public signboards
6. Penalisation for not observing signboards

Interview questions having a common or similar theme were put under one theme. Their placement is given in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Placement of Questions Under Themes*

S. NO	Themes	Interview questions placed
1	Interest in reading public signboards, their importance, and function	Interview questions 1,2, 3
2	Observance of public signboards by the public	Interview questions 4 & 6
3	Features of a signboard	Interview question 5
4	Maintenance of social order through public signboards	Interview questions 7 & 8
5	Improvements suggested in public signboards	Interview question 9
6	Penalisation for not observing public signboards	Interview question 10

After identifying these six themes, they were analyzed in the light of the second research question, which concerns linguistic structures beyond the sentence. Research findings that emerged after the thematic analysis revealed that the local people are well aware of the signboards around them. Though they know them well, it has still been observed that generally, the public does not follow signboards, also reproved by the results of the observations conducted in the selected survey areas. A large group of people who do not follow public signboards are those who are not literate enough to read English or Urdu written on signboards. Many people do not follow the instructions written on signboards even when they know how to read them, and it is because of 'herd mentality'. They just do not follow public signboards because others are not following them. This was even accepted by two out of eight participants when interviews were conducted with them. Many of them concluded that the attractive features of a signboard were bigger font sizes and bright colors. Regarding prohibitions and warnings on signboards, the stance of the participants was that there should not be warnings and prohibitions on the signboards as it makes people all the more not to follow what is written on the signboards. Many believed that apart from writing down dos and don'ts on signboards, security personnel should be employed to make sure the people are following public signboards. The participants were also asked about their opinions on the changes they would like to suggest in public signboards. Penalization incidents faced by the participants were shared by them.

Six out of eight (75%) participants said that they follow the instructions given on public signboards and gave various reasons for it like, "it makes you a good citizen" (P1 local/LVP/M/I/line 47), "They are same as laws but on a lower level" (P3 local/BBH/M/I/line 22-23), "They are beneficial for us" (P8 local/CM/F/I/line 60) and so on. The two people who answered in negation had their reasons for it. Participant 4 was of the view that "It depends on the kind of information given on the signboard and how beneficial to the public it is. Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't" (P4 local/PIMS/M/I/line 32-35). The other participant who answered differently was Participant 7, who stated, "I try to follow them, but if I see others are not following them, then I go with the flow" (P7 local/SGM/F/I/line 15-17).

As for people not following them, the general trend was that the participants argued that it depends on the situation. They claimed that if the signboards are written in English, there is less chance of people following them as a majority of people in Pakistan cannot read English, and even if they are in Urdu, many people cannot simply read, be it any language it is written in. As participant 1 opined,

The guys, the administration who arrange these signboards, have to consider what is the local population. Is it more educated, or is it not as educated? The not-educated population will be more interested in the directional or diagrammatic signs or showing the ways, but if it is more urban areas, more

educated people will read the text of the signboard. Also, in general, it depends from place to place. (P1 local/LVP/M/I/line 47-55)

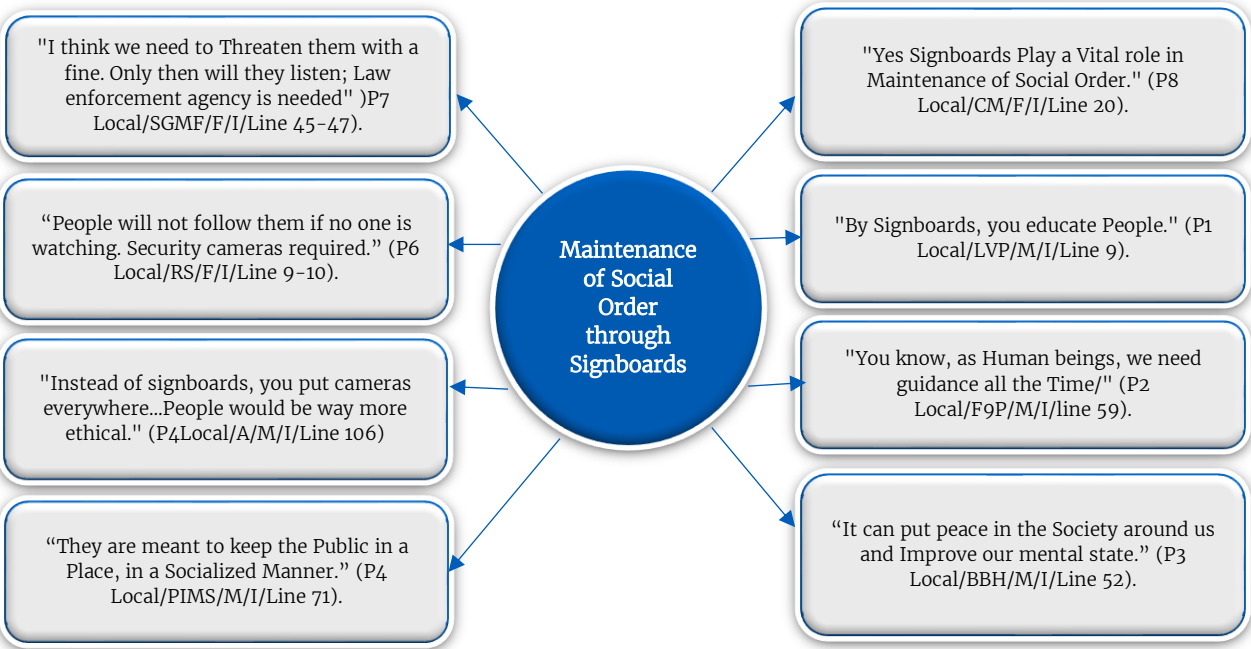
Participant 2 believed that it was a fifty-fifty thing. Some follow them, and some do not. "I don't think so; I think generally people do not follow them" (P6 local/RS/F/I/line 85) were the remarks of Participant 6, based on his observation. The interviewees identified attractive features of signboards in Table 5.

Table 5

S. No	Common Responses	Participants
1	Attractive colours	(P1 local/LVP/M/I), (P2 local/F9P/M/I), (P3 local/BBH/M/I), (P4 local/PIMS/M/I), (P5 local/A/M/I), (P6 local/RS/F/I), (P7 local/SGM/F/I) & (P8 local/CM/F/I)
2	Big font size	(P1 local/LVP/M/I), (P2 local/F9P/M/I), (P3 local/BBH/M/I), (P4 local/PIMS/M/I), (P5 local/A/M/I), (P6 local/RS/F/I), (P7 local/SGM/F/I) & (P8 local/CM/F/I)
3	Shape of signboard	(P8 local/CM/F/I)
4	Neon signs	(P1 local/LVP/M/I)
5	Catchy signboard	(P7 local/SGM/F/I)
6	Placement of a signboard	(P7 local/SGM/F/I), (P2 local/F9P/M/I)
7	Readable font size	(P2 local/F9P/M/I)
8	Less information	(P3 local/BBH/M/I)
9	Size of signboard	(P4 local/PIMS/M/I)
10	Bilingual signboard	(P5 local/A/M/I)
11	Writing	(P2 local/F9P/M/I), (P6 local/RS/F/I) & (P8 local/CM/F/I)

The phrases used by the participants when they were asked if they think signboards can be used to maintain social order are given below:

Graph



It can be seen how all eight participants answered when they were asked about the maintenance of social order through signboards. Five out of eight (62%) participants commented that signboards play an important part in the maintenance of social order, while three (37%) of them were not really sure it could be possible. According to them, apart from writing instructions to follow on public signboards, security cameras should be placed, or security personnel should be employed in public areas to ensure people are



really following signboards so that social order is maintained. Otherwise, they think that only signboards playing this crucial role in social order seems like a bleak idea.

The researcher asked the participants about their experiences regarding penalization for not observing public signboards. They all had stories to share. Participant 1 shared his experience when he was caught breaking a traffic signal in Dubai. He added, "There is zero tolerance and this discipline helps them to maintain order" (P1 local/LVP/M/I/line 103). Participants 2 and 3 had not gone through any such experience. Participant 4 shared not one but three experiences. One was going to the ladies' washroom instead of the men's in a foreign country, keeping the car lights on when stated otherwise, and using mobile phones in a mosque when written on signboards not to. He said, "Everybody does it; one must be lying if he says he has never been reprimanded" (P4 local/PIMS/M/I/line 59). Participant 5 had an interesting story to tell. His words were,

We haven't been penalized by the government, but we have been, I guess, publicly shamed. For example, we were sitting on a handicapped chair on a train, and we didn't realize that there was a signboard behind us that read don't sit here. And then there was a really old lady who came onto the train, and as soon as she saw that, she started screaming or just telling us not to sit there. Of course, we got up as soon as we realized it, but it was again our mistake for not noticing the sign at all. (P5 local/A/M/I/line 133-138)

Participant 6 was fined 500 rupees in a place in Islamabad called Pakistan Monument when her kids accidentally threw juice on one of the wax models. Participant 7 shared her father's story where he was fined for breaking the speed limit, and Participant 8 had a similar incident of breaking the speed limit with her husband. All these cases of penalization show that charging people for breaking the rules is a practice that is common and is used by the authorities to maintain social order. By gaining the opinions and viewpoints of the local people visiting the selected public areas, it can be seen how they perceive public signboards, how they behave around them, and how their stance on it relates to the maintenance of social order.

### Research Findings of the Interviews Conducted with the Authorities

The researcher next utilized the data obtained from interviewing the authorities of the eight selected survey areas/public places, where they were asked about their opinion regarding public signboards, and conversations were held regarding the discourse of language and power. Now, the researcher will analyze "the study of social practices and ideological assumptions that are associated with language and/ or communication" (Schiffrin et al., 2001).

The data derived from the interviews with the authorities was handled in the same way as the data obtained from the local people. After reading and rereading, the researcher conducted a thematic analysis. Six themes emerged after conducting the thematic analysis. They are given in the Table 6.

**Table 6**

S. No	Themes	Interview questions placed
1	Designing of a public signboard	Interview questions 1,2, 3
2	Features of a public signboard	Interview question 7
3	Maintenance of social order through public signboards	Interview questions 4, 5 & 9
4	Importance of observing public signboards	Interview question 6
5	Penalisation for not observing public signboards	Interview question 8
6	Effect of public signboards on the behavior of people	Interview question 10

After identifying these six themes, they were analyzed in the light of the third research question, which concerns the discourse of language and power. Research findings that emerged after the thematic analysis revealed that the authorities talked mostly to depict a good picture of their respective public institution. However, discrepancies were observed as the researcher counter-checked them with the other modes of data collection and analysis that were conducted as part of the research. It was observed that the participants tried to put all the blame on the public, that they were the ones who did not follow the instructions written on public signboards while they themselves did their best in this regard.

In response to the question of who decides the content and design of public signboards in the selected survey areas, participants from the two parks (P1 & P2) and BB hospital (P3) which 37.5 % said they send it to a higher authority for approval while the airport (P5) and railway (P6) (25%) had its own committees for it. PIMS hospital's administration department does it, and in the two malls (25%), it is the responsibility of the marketing department to make decisions about the content and design of public signboards. When asked about when they last made amendments to public signboards, it was very odd to find out that many of them had not made any amendments as of late. In fact, in response to this question, the participants talked about the maintenance of signboards rather than amendments. F9 park manager (P2) said they did not do any maintenance for a very long time due to non-issuance of budget. It was also observed during the observation that the signboards of F9 park were old and rustic, which means they were not well maintained. Participant from BB hospital (P3) had different views, as he said it is their need to change signboards with time. He added, "life of panaflex signboards is less, so they change them every three to four months, and in case of epidemics like swine flu and malaria, they install signboards for public awareness" (P3 authority/BBH/M/I/line 31-33). Participants from PIMS (P4) said they do it as a routine process, and they changed the old signboards a year back. Surprisingly, only the railway authority (P6) knew the difference between amendment and maintenance, and he shared that they recently added the symbol of stairs with platforms 4 and 5 as they were on the other side of the railway track. They did this to ease the passengers.

In question 4, the interviewer asked the participants about how social order is maintained in their respective public institutions and if there is any special department for it. The airport and BB hospital (25%) had special departments to look at the maintenance of social order, but others did not. The representative from Lakeview Park (P1) said that they maintain the social order themselves, only taking help from the local police. His words were, "We, with the help of the local police...try to implement ethical norms that are present in the society. With the help of local police, law enforcement agencies, and government agencies, we implement them. Our message is clear on signboards" (P1 authority/LVP/M/I/line 94-97). The park manager of F9 Park (P2) was of the view that it is a park after all, and they cannot implement anything forcefully. His words were, "We have security guards for it...but we cannot question or inquire people on anything, what we can do is to let them know what to do and where is what" (P2 authority/F9P/M/I/line 102-105). The same was the case with the two malls (25%). Talking BB Hospital is a full government-led hospital, so they have a special department that takes care of social order in that hospital. On the other hand, the participants from PIMS hospital (P4) totally negated that they do not have any such department. His words were, "This is a hospital. We are very busy attending patients" (P4 authority/PIMS/M/I/line 57).

The fifth interview question asked the participants if they think public signboards serve the purpose of maintaining social order, in response to which all of them (100%) agreed that they help a lot. The park manager of Lakeview Park (P2) added that although signboards are important to maintain social order, additional measures are necessary for illiterate people who cannot read signboards; for them, they have installed CCTV cameras and deployed security guards. During planned observations, it was revealed that only two out of ten CCTV cameras were working fine, others were broken and were never repaired by the administration.

The Railway officer (P6) had some interesting points to share with respect to the maintenance of social order through public signboards. He said If you look at the trains that come and go from small areas...they are not literate enough. Or even if they are literate, they won't bother to read the signboards, as they are not habitual to read or follow signboards. Even if we play tape recorders for them, they won't listen to them. They are still seen asking questions for directions, like when the XYZ train will depart, etc. On the other hand, people who travel between big cities are more literate...People traveling in it are educated people. They have awareness. They don't bug us much. (P6 authority/RS/M/I/line 43-48)

The railway officer claimed that public signboards are followed in their public institution based on the type of people traveling in their trains. The participants from Centaurus Mall (P8) believed that they had observed a change in people's behavior due to public signboards.

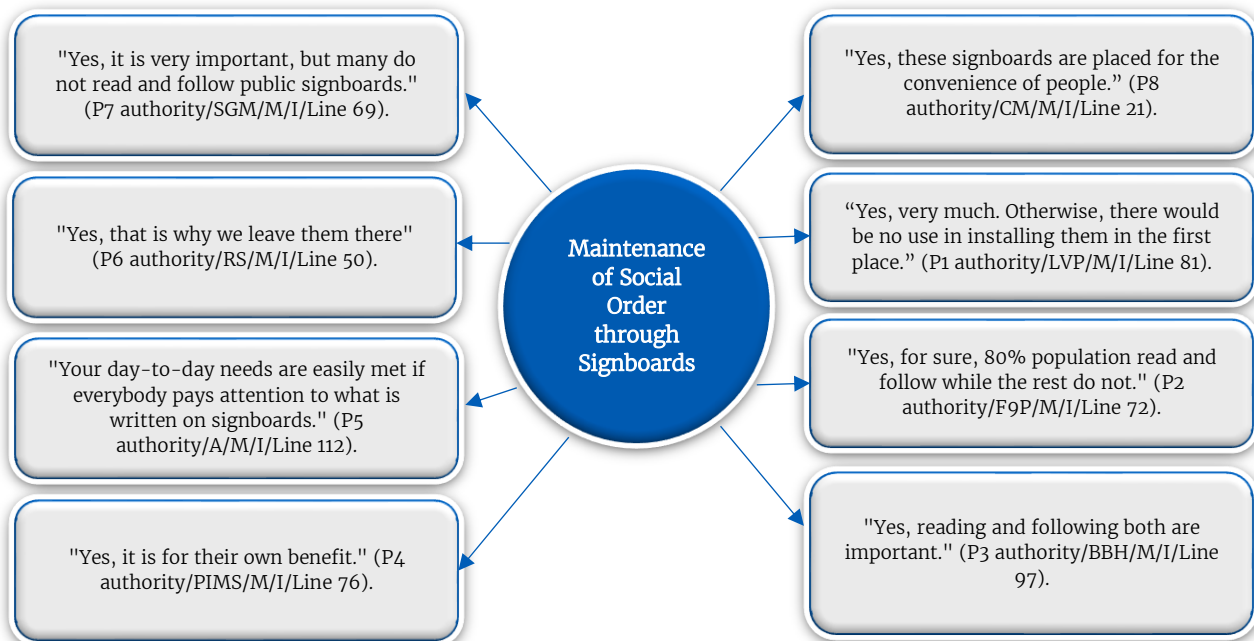


Interview question ninth, which was also made part of this theme, asked the participants if, apart from maintaining social order, what else do public signboards convey? This question was asked to gather their opinion regarding what function they consider a public signboard could fulfill other than maintaining social order. In response to this question, the participants shared different interesting answers regarding public signboards: "deliver messages...they are a piece of aesthetical beauty" (P1 authority/LVP/M/I/line 183), "they give directions" (P2 authority/F9P/M/I/line 88; P7 authority/SGM/M/I/line 41), (P4 authority/PIMS/M/I/line 18) "helps in public awareness" (P3 authority/BBH/M/I/line 31; P6 authority/RS/M/I/line 22), "they help in educating people so that they become good citizens of the country" (P5 authority/A/M/I/line 48-49) and "convey general messages to the public" (P8 authority/CM/M/I/line 34). For a clear picture, refer to Table 7 below.

**Table 7**

Sub-Theme	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Special Department for social order maintenance	We do it ourselves with the help of local police.	No, it is a park, after all.	Yes, we have it.	No, it is a hospital; we are too busy attending to patients.	No, We do not have it.	Yes	No	No
Role of Public signboards in the maintenance of Social Order	Yes, they help a lot, but additional measures are required.	Yes, we do.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, but some people will not follow whatever you do.	Yes	Yes, we have observed a change in people's behavior due to signboards.
Role of public signboards other than maintaining social order	They deliver the message and are a piece of aesthetical beauty.	They give directions.	They help in public awareness.	They give direction	Educate people	They help in public awareness.	They give directions.	Convey general messages to people.

As part of the question about the importance of observing public signboards, the following responses were received, as given below.



From this figure, it can be seen that all eight participants (100%) agreed that it is very important for the public to read public signboards. Although all of them agreed on the importance of public signboards, whether they fulfill the role of maintenance of social order is again a question. It is noted that through their conversation, the authorities built such a discourse of language and power that pointed more in their

own favor rather than the public. They did this to maintain a good image of their respective public institutions so that the name of their public institutions remains revered and elated.

The very last interview question asked participants if signboards affect the way the general public behaves in their respective public institutions. Participants from the airport, railway station, and Lakeview Park (37.5%) believed it depended on the literacy rate. The park manager of Lakeview Park (P1) referred to the effect of public signboards on the behavior of people as a "far-fetched idea" (P1 authority/LVP/M/I/line 193). He further elaborated,

So yes, those thirty to forty percent [literate people] will behave nicely in the park, but I am sorry, the rest sixty percent won't behave properly in the park...many people even believe it is their personal right and freedom to destroy and damage public property. (P1 authority/LVP/M/I/line 194-197)

The park manager of F9 Park (P2) agreed that they are short of signboards, so he thinks it does not affect peoples' behavior in his park much. He elaborated, "As we have lack of financial budget, we have fewer signboards. We need more signboards. One round of this park is seven to eight kilometers. And the signboards being installed are equal to nothing" (P2 authority/F9P/M/I/line 82-83). The participants from the two hospitals (25%) believed that, yes, signboards affect the behavior of people, but only if they stop to read them. The representative from PIMS hospital (P4) said that it is important to write in both English and Urdu, but still, people do not obey signboards. His exact words were,

In our hospital, it seems like the literate and illiterate are equal. I have seen many educated people not following signboards and even poor, illiterate following them at times. But generally, people do not obey. So try to write in a way that all classes try to obey them. (P4 authority/PIMS/M/I/line 7-10)

He further shared that people even steal away the dustbins rather than throwing garbage in them. He said, "Five to ten percent obey, but the majority are such who will litter exactly next to the dustbin, rather than throwing the garbage inside the bin" (P4 authority/PIMS/M/I/line 89-91). Participants 7 and 8 from the two malls (25%) believed it does have an impact. The participant from Centaurus Mall (P8) added, "Yes, signboards help people behave in a certain way. They tell them what is allowed in an area and what not, which paves the way for a peaceful order and structure in the mall" (P8 authority/CM/M/I/line 67-69).

This research question was based on the discourse of language and power in light of the current research on the maintenance of social order through public signboards. It was observed that this was more of their personal interpretation of ideas related to public signboards rather than the current scenario of signboards and the situation of social order in their respective public institutions. This indicates their power as an authority. As they were at a higher place than the local people, they used their power and turned the discourse in their own favor. It should be mentioned here that the most honest answers were given by the authorities of the two parks, and the most democratic answers were given by the authorities of the two malls.

## Conclusion

The present study aimed to examine the condition of social order in public areas in the linguistic landscape of Pakistan. The imposition and maintenance of social order was explored through the mediational means of public signboards, using the lens of mediated discourse analysis as the theoretical framework. In order to dig into the nexus of practice and to probe the issue at hand, interviews were conducted with eight local people present at the selected survey areas, from where the photographic documentation was conducted. Their opinion was taken regarding public signboards and the role of public signboards in the maintenance of social order. This came under linguistic structures beyond the sentence. After this, interviews were conducted with the authorities of all the eight selected public institutions, where they were engaged in a conversation related to the discourse of language and power. It was done to answer the next research question.

By applying mediated discourse analysis to the data, the researcher was able to find out how mediated actions at the micro-level, obeying/disobeying public signboards, and at the macro-level, maintenance of social order, were performed at sites of engagement (where signboards were installed), through the



mediational means of the language used on signboards to map down the case of imposition of social order by the authorities. It sketched a picture of the current scenario of social order maintenance in the linguistic landscape of Pakistan. It is hoped that the research findings of the present study will be fruitful for the authorities of public institutions in Pakistan. They can improve the ways of maintaining social order by reading the results of this research, as it includes direct views of local people, the people for whom signboards are made to be followed. The authorities can think of ways to improve or maybe change the wording of signboards, which were considered harsh, restrictive, or contained too much negation, as per this study. This could, in turn, improve the condition of social order, as people would react in a positive manner by looking at the new signboards, with polite wording being used and the addition of symbols along with words. The overall redesigning of signboards by painting them fresh, along with the changing of words, can really prove to be a positive step in the linguistic landscape of Pakistan. Research is a continuous process, and there is always room to go further. The present research should be replicated in other areas of Pakistan to verify and revalidate the findings of the current study as it was a new study where the maintenance of social order was observed by analyzing the linguistic landscape of Pakistan.

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