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THE SOCIOCULTURAL IMPACT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING ON IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AMONG SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN PAKISTAN AND OTHER FORMER BRITISH COLONIES

Dr Asim Aqeel¹, Rida Akram², Mahrukh³, Zahra Batool⁴

¹Assistant Professor (English), Department of Humanities and Linguistics, University of
Assistant Professor (English),

¹Department of Humanities and Linguistics, University of Agriculture Faisalabad, Pakistan

²Lecturer, FAST National University Chinyot- Campus, Pakistan.

³ Instructor, FAST National University, Chiniot-Campus, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁴Department of Languages and Cultural Studies, University of Baltistan Skardu Gilgit-
Baltistan, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Language is a fundamental aspect of human identity, mediating our communication with the world and influencing our sense of self. Identity is multifaceted and influenced by various factors, including language and culture. Bilingualism is the norm in many regions of the world, and in Pakistan, multiple languages exist side by side, with English serving as the official language. English has had a significant impact on the identity construction of second language learners in Pakistan and other former British colonies. This chapter aims to explore the relationship between language and identity in a sociocultural context and understand how English language learning and teaching have affected the identity construction of second language learners. The chapter poses several questions, including the definition of identity, the role of sociocultural identity in second language learners, the influence of English as an international language on identity construction, and the current state of identity construction among Pakistani ESL learners. Ultimately, the chapter seeks to provide insight into how to promote positive identity construction through language learning and teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a faculty given to the homo sapiens by the Almighty. Along with major functions that we perform with language, it mediates our identity to the

world also. Identity is multifaceted and multi-dimensional; influenced by, race, ethnicity, societal, cultural and personal beliefs, and above all, it is influenced by the language in the environment. With second language learning, the learner is exposed to another language and culture that strongly influences his identity in the social world. As we know that bilingualism is the norm in the world, two or more languages exist side by side in various regions of the world. Pakistan is essentially a bilingual or multilingual society, where people speak two or more languages comfortably. Finding a monolingual in Pakistan is near to impossible. The language they speak, is one marker of identity, hence we have Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, Pashto, Saraiki and many more languages and identities. However, all regional languages enjoy an equal status in the country, where they are marginalised to be a home language. English enjoys the status of official language in Pakistan in all regional areas, leading to learning English as a symbol of status in the society. The youth in Pakistan is inclined towards learning English language as it affirms them a better opportunity of work in the country. This diglossic situation, leads to complex arenas of identity construction among the people in Pakistan. The influence of English has deeply affected how the youth wants to get identified in the world. This is true of all the countries who were British colonies, where people keep on moving and adjusting their identities under the strong influence of English language that seems to colonise them still. It seems as if the coloniser has gone but left his language to dominate the colonised even centuries later.

The chapter aims to understand the basic concept and link between language and identity in a sociocultural perspective and uncover how English has influenced the identity construction of a second language user (SLU) at personal, ethical, social, cultural and national level. What is the role that English language learning and teaching has played on identity construction of an SLU?

- The chapter aims to find out the answers to the following questions:
- What is identity and how has the concept of identity evolved overtime?
- What is sociocultural identity and how does it affect the second language learner identity?
- What research says about Language and Identity in a sociocultural perspective?
- What is the influence of English as an International language on Identity of a second language learner?
- What is the present state of affairs in terms of identity construction among Pakistani ESL learners?
- What needs to be done and how?

What is Identity?

The term identity carries different usages. Some define identity as a relation of an individual with culture of people. They, however, lack the explanation of difference between ethnicity and identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Some define identity in context of social identity theory as the knowledge of a person that he belongs to a social group or category (Hogg & Abrams., 1988;

Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel, 1982). The third usage is the association of self with the multiple roles' individuals play in a society (Stryker & Burke, 2000)

Theories of Identity construction

Tajfel (1974, 1981) presented one of the most famous theories of social identity. Tajfel was a social psychologist and believed that identity is derived from membership of group. Tajfel (1974) defines social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 69). Tajfel argues that as identities are derived from memberships of groups, individuals can change their group membership if the present group does not satisfy the elements of social identity that individuals think are positive for them. However, changing group membership, and thus social identity to a certain extent, may not always be possible, leaving individuals with limited options: changing their interpretations of the characteristics of their in-group so as to view them in a more positive light or engaging in social action to change the situation. However, Tajfel does not explain how this is to be done. Drawing heavily on Tajfel's theory, Giles and Johnson (1981, 1987) developed their ethnolinguistic identity theory, focusing on language as a salient marker of group membership and social identity. Giles and Johnson also discuss group membership, hypothesizing that individuals compare their own social group to out-groups in order to make their own favourably distinct and that positive distinctiveness enables individuals to achieve a positive social identity. If the comparison is negative, however, the authors maintain that an individual may adopt several strategies to attain a more positive social identity. One is to assimilate into a group that the individual or the individual's group views more positively. If language is a salient marker of group membership, the individual may face linguistic adaptations that may result in subtractive bilingualism or even language erosion if a large number of members of a particular group assimilate into another to achieve a more positive group identity.

Interactional sociolinguists, such as Gumperz (1970, 1982) in their research on social identity also focus on language. They believe that "social identity and ethnicity are in large part established and maintained through language" (Gumperz & Cook- Gumperz, 1982, p. 7). Their research on specific speech events examined the relationship of social situation with different linguistic categories such as phonology, morphology, syntax and lexis. They also worked on the instances of code switching to find out under which situation and the interactants code switching occurs either between variety of same languages or between different languages as "linguistic alternates within the repertoire serve to symbolize the differ- ing social identities which members may assume" (Blom & Gumperz, 1972, p. 421). The minority group's language is often termed as the in-group "we code" language, whereas the majority group's language is considered the out-group or "they code" language (Gumperz J. , 1982, p. 66), and code switching may signal various group memberships and identities. Gumperz (1970) argues that analysis at microlevel reveals that code-switching provides "definite and clearly understandable communicative ends" (p. 9).

Gumperz (1972), in their research on code-switching, found out that most of the members of their research population spoke two varieties of Norwegian, Ranamal, which is the local dialect, and Bokmal, which is one of the two national dialects. As the local dialect carried with it great prestige, and as "a person's native speech is regarded as an integral part of his family background, a sign of his local identity" (p. 411), people living in Hemnesberget used this local dialect to interact with other people residing there which also served as a source to mark group identity. The research, however, found that when interacting with tourists or members of other communities, they mostly used the standard dialect. Furthermore, it was seen that the switching of dialect was based on the interactant. In case of students, students shifted to standard dialect, even when all students belonged to Hemnesberget. This might be due to the reason that academic education was mostly in standard dialect and students trying to maintain their identity as student tried to maintain standard dialect.

Heller (1982, 1987, 1988) also believed that there are several ways by which language and ethnicity interact. Language may "symbolize group identity and become emblems of that identity, especially when there is contact with other groups whose ways of being are different" (Heller, 1982, p. 3). This is the same idea that was presented by Gumperz (1972) and also supports the ethnolinguistic theory of Giles and Johnson's that states that language is marker of identity and group membership. However, Heller (1982) focuses more on the choice of language and how the language is actually used in specific contexts instead of focusing on positive and negative associations of individuals in the form of in-group and out-group membership as was focused by Giles and Johnson. These choices in the use of language represent relationship with society and thus help in the construction of identity.

Heller (1982) focused on the choice of the language in interactions in any private company to look for the differences how language is used by people who belong to different ethnic backgrounds and concludes that language is an emblem of ethnic. Furthermore, the division in class in each of the ethnolinguistic communities created differences in the use of language in language varieties and these varieties resulted in stylistic and social difference in specific situations. Later, Heller (1992), conducted a research on linguistically mixed marriages. The researchers found out that women faced many difficulties in their daily life routines for instance bringing up their children bilingually despite the case that these women were part of dominated linguistic minority. The researchers conclude that these women see social identity as contradictory and find themselves bound.

As a type of social identity, cultural identity has been viewed as a complex construction which includes awareness of people with their culture and recognition of the group to which they belong (Lee, 2002). This recognition and awareness have three parts:

- 1) building of an affiliation to a group and characteristics,
- 2) the individual's feelings towards the group he or she belongs to, and

3) the individual's belief of the extent to which the group's characteristics are represented in one's self. (Ngo & Li, 2016).

Norton (2006) draws a distinction between social identity and cultural identity. She defines social identity as the relationship between social world and individual language learners while cultural identity is the relationship of language learner with members of some ethnic group. Considering the relationship between interaction with world and identity, Norton (2000) defined identity as:

“how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future”

Norton's findings indicate that identity is related as to how people see their existence as an interaction with others and relation to the environment. This relationship is established with other individuals in the environment owing to language. Therefore, language can be stated as a common tool for interacting with other individuals in a society and an important aspect in identity construction (Norton, 2000). Norton (2013) foreground language as the base of language learner's identity. Norton & Toohey (2011) argues that the identities of language learner are multiple and are always in process.

Language learning and Cultural Identity

Culture includes norms, values, beliefs, language, art, habits and skills learned by members from a specific group (Lee, 2002). Language, as one of the most important factors in a culture, is used widely within a cultural environment, plays an essential role in group's identity that is passed down from generation to generation, and serves as the main tool to maintain culture and distinguishes one culture from others (Giles & Coupland, 1999; Lee, 2002). Many studies have discussed what kind of role cultural identity plays in language learning. There are multiple views or opinions in this new field. Some researchers found cultural identity has a positive impact in language learning. On the contrary, some researchers believed cultural identity can impede language learning. Others pointed out there is a reciprocal relationship between cultural identity and language learning, meaning that potential links are running in both directions. Next, I provide further details of related literature on the relations of cultural identity to language learning in both heritage language, which has been defined as an immigrant, indigenous or ancestral language (Shin, 2010), and L2 learning.

Many studies found that affiliation to a cultural group promotes heritage language learning. For example, Tse (2000) and Shin (2010) showed that immigrants' attitudes toward the heritage group and its language speakers are related to the individual's language ability and interest in maintaining his or her heritage language. As with heritage language, cultural identity can also predict L2 language learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) stated that people with an integrative orientation, who learn a new language in order to connect with local society, were more likely to demonstrate higher motivation in

learning an L2, which in turn, promoted their language performance. As discussed above, one of the purposes in individuals with integrative orientation is that they have a desire to identify with members from the L2 community.

Although cultural identity can promote language learning (as discussed above), other studies have found negative relationships between identity and language performance. Zhang and his colleagues (2013) found heritage-culture cues will activate bicultural immigrants' network of knowledge related to heritage culture as well as language, which will in turn hinder their second-language (L2) processing in communicating. For example, as a Chinese immigrant in the United States, although speaking to a Chinese face triggers more social comfort, it actually reduces speakers' English fluency at the same time (Zhang, Morris, Cheng., & Yap, 2013).

Some scholars have argued that the relationship between cultural identity and language learning is bidirectional, with language performance both resulting from and contributing to cultural identity. A study of 291 Swedish-speaking youth in Finland (Henning-Lindblom & Liebkind, 2007) showed that higher level of proficiency in Finnish (L2) led to more interaction with local people, which in turn, increased identification with the target L2 group. For heritage language, Guardado (2010) pointed out that "...success in developing and maintaining a HL and the possession of a solid ethnic identity can be viewed in light of a dialectical relationship." (p. 331).

Constructivism and language learning

Constructivism is a vague concept that is being used in classrooms by many schools and is considered best method for teaching and learning (Katherine C . Powell & Kalina, 2009). Constructivism has its roots in philosophy which was later applied to sociology, anthropology. Psychology and education. Citing Yager (1991), Wang (2011) accounts Giambatista Vico to be the first constructivist philosopher who made a statement in 1710 that "one only knows something if one can explain it". The first contemporaries that developed a clear idea in education and applied it to children development and classrooms were Jean Piaget and John Dewey in 1966 (Wang, 2011). Constructivism success in education was a result of the frustration that educators had due to behaviourism (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). Powell, Farrar & Cohen (1985) writes that the constructivist based pedagogical approach became so popular with educators that was rare in these days and teachers adopted it with quite enthusiasm. The frustration for behaviourism in schools was due to the long series of strategies that schools management and teachers has to shoulder all alone. If there was some problem with learning, behaviourism demanded a complete change of environment (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002).

Psychological development of the children was the main aim of Piaget's constructivism. Piaget (1973) demanded teachers to understand the process of the development of child psychology to take constructivism into account. He considered discovery to be the base of the learning. As believed by Piaget, the fundamental basis of learning was discovery "To understand is to discover, or

reconstruct by rediscovery, and such conditions must be complied with if in the future individuals are to be formed who are capable of production and creativity and not simply repetition” (Wang, 2011).

Another important supporter of Constructivism is Lev. S Vygotsky. Owing to his emphasis on social context in learning. Some believed that Vygotsky is not constructivist. While other strongly points out that Vygotsky was constructivist as Vygotsky stress on children creating their own concept and they consider this as core of constructivism (Wang, 2011). Vygotsky however considers that the cognitive system of an individual is direct result of his social life and both are inseparable (Vygotsky, 1987).

Audrey Gray (1997) considers constructivism as a way of learning in which there is no passive learning of students. The classroom is learner centred. He thinks that knowledge is not something that can be given by a teacher by standing in front of a class to a group of students rather it is a mental process in which learners build and create their own meaning of knowledge through active, mental processes of learning. The teacher in class is a facilitator that helps students to provide experience and environment to hypothesize, manipulate, research, investigate and pose questions. According to Katherine and Kalina (2009), in order to use this pedagogical theory properly, teacher must be aware of the current state of knowledge of the learner.

A similar idea of constructivism was also presented by Duffy and Jonassen (1992). They claim that knowledge and truth are actually constructed in the mind of the learner and it is not something that is outside of the mind. The learner develops its own knowledge by actively taking part in learning process. Thus, as a result of constructivist pedagogical approach, learner autonomy is developed.

Katherine and Kalina (2009) draws a distinction between cognitive constructivism in which learner acquires knowledge by a personal process and social constructivism in which the learner acquires knowledge by interaction with teacher and peers.

Defining Constructivism, Brooks and Brooks writes “Constructivism is not a theory about teaching...it is a theory about knowledge and learning... the theory defines knowledge as temporary, developmental, socially and culturally mediated, and thus, non-objective” (Brooks & Brooks, 1993, p. vii).

Language and Constructivism

Language is considered to be central in a learning process as it is the foundation of the conceptual ecology of an individual (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). The argument of Vygotsky that language makes higher order thinking possible for individual has made the linguists to reconsider the role of language in learning. Wertsch (1985) has listed the functions of language stated by Vygotsky as Signaling, significative, nominative, individual, social, communicative, intellectual, and indicative. According to Vygotsky, the speech produced by children is just not only a way to communicate actions but

also gives us information about the learning (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). This way language provides us an insight of current knowledge of the learner which was considered an important aspect to make constructive approach successful by Katherine and Kalina (2009).

Vygotsky stressed that language also plays an important role as children just not only speak what they are doing. The speech of the children also gives insight of the psychological condition of children and it is by language that they give formal and informal meaning to things (Wertsch, 1985). Thus language also plays its role in creation of meaning. This emphasis by constructivists on the role of language in learning has made educators to shift their teaching strategies and using language as a tool for meaning making process.

Acculturation Model and Identity

Berry (1997; 2003), in acculturation model, presented us with four types of acculturation:

- Assimilation: individuals have high host cultural identity and low home cultural identity.
- Integration: individuals have high level original and host identity.
- Separation: individuals reject their dominant or host cultural identity and maintain their native culture.
- Marginalization: individuals show little concern to both cultures.

This model of acculturation was developed to study how immigrants adapt to new society (Berry, 1977). Later, Smith and Khawaja (2011) found that this model of acculturation can also be applied to international students as they can also be viewed as a population of immigrants that are residing in a new environment and face many difficulties including social, adjustment, discrimination and stress. These students also undergo identity process during migration.

Uni-dimensional and bi-directional models

Ngo & Li (2016) demonstrated two different models in understanding interrelationships between immigrants' identities and adaptation to the local society. The first model, the unidimensional bipolar model, indicates that ethnic identity is contradictory to local identity (Tartakovsky, 2013). As time passes, the immigrant's original identity weakens and local identity increases (Ngo & Li, 2016).

On the contrary, the two-dimensional model believes that two cultural identities can exist at the same time and they are independent of each other (Berry, 1997). In other words, like immigrants, international students can keep their original cultural identity and meanwhile develop their local identity to adapt to a new society, which make them have the ability to change comfortably between their two cultural identities depending on different time and situations

What is present status of research in the area?

Wright and Gao (2020) concludes in their report on five-year publications of the Journal of Language, Identity and Education that the studies published had qualitative, quantitative and mixed method methodologies. However, qualitative studies are far more common with case studies and ethnographies as the main research types. Some of the recent studies in the field covering identity construction issues of second language users are discussed as follows. Nigar & Kostogriz (2019) conducted a research on the personal and professional identity of non-native English speaking teachers (NNEST). They found out that even with the death of native speaker term around 1930, the stance is still dominant. NNEST face problems due to this native speaker stance during finding jobs in ELT. They conclude that due to this socio-cultural stance, which is dominant after colonialism, is affecting destructively on the professional and personal self of NNEST and is creating psychological effects in them due to which they are unable to develop a strong professional identity.

Fotovatiana & Miller (2014) also give same findings in their research carried on international students studying in international universities of Australia. Many students get admission in Australian Universities and a degree from a Australian University will give extra credits in getting permanent residency in Australia. The international Students in Australia face a number of identity changes in them from teachers to students, from native speakers of their mother tongue to non-native speakers of English, a label of international students. However the presence of permanent residency (PR) concept played a vital role in identity change. Those who wanted to get PR were interested in shifting their identity and adapt the cultural identity they were witnessing in Australia. Those who were just there to get their PhD degrees on the expense of government and were to return to their country after completing the degree were less interesting in getting to know about the culture of Australia.

A similar research was carried out by Fotovatian (2010) in Iranian English Teachers in Australia and found out that Iranian English Teachers were more likely to know about the culture of people living in Australia and getting close to them. They however faced a number of difficulties including cultural gaps, unfamiliarity of a number of things, difficulty in engagement in local discourse. However to survive as non-native English teacher in among native teachers, they had to negotiate their identity.

In their research Duff & Uchida (2017) concluded that it is mostly the teacher that has to go through the negotiations of identity as he has to explain all the cultural aspects and explanations related to identity with that culture to students. During this process it becomes difficult for the teacher to maintain his self without the impact of cultures he is explaining to his students.

Fattah (2016) in his dissertation, studied the factors that became a source of identity negotiation for teachers teaching in Arab Countries. The research was carried out in two universities, a public and a private university on students of Teacher Training Programs. The findings suggested the presence of three

factors that led to the negotiation of identity viz. culture, context and institutional policy.

Martel (2015) studied a case of Spanish student teacher's learning and found that during training program, she had to go through a number of roles which she had to go through in order to become an efficient teacher. Being a foreign language teacher, she had to negotiate a number of times to meet the demands of the training program. Martel (2015) concludes that teachers had to learn different situations by which they can grow the opportunities which increase their demand among stakeholders. During learning all these situations they had to negotiate on their culture identities.

The above researches suggest that individuals, specially teachers had to go through a number of changes in their social and personal identities to adapt to the social context they are in. These might be to make a classroom more effective, build relations with others in a society for future needs or to become professionally sustained. All these factors make individuals negotiate their identities under social circumstances.

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