Investigating Impact of English Language in Shaping Personal Identities of Students: A Comparative Study of Private vs Public Schools in Multan City

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ABSTRACT

This research examines how English language influences personal identities of students within an aim to explore their perceptions and attitudes towards it's learning as a second language. Hence, the secondary objective has been to compare English language proficiency levels and usage patterns among students attending private and public schools in Multan. The mixed method has been employed by the researcher. Meanwhile, the sample has been comprised of 300 students taken from public and private schools having the ratio of 150 from each sector. However, the findings indicate that English plays an important role in constructing students' personal identities and shaping their behaviors. These insights highlight the importance of considering cultural and linguistic contexts in understanding language use in digital communication platforms and promoting inclusive language policies that respect linguistic diversity and cultural heritage.

Introduction

Language shapes people's ideas of who they are and where they fit into society. It is a tool for communication as well as a symbol of cultural identity. The languages we speak have an impact on our understanding of ourselves as well as how we interact with others in a variety of linguistic and cultural circumstances. In order to better understand the intricate relationship between language and human identity, this introduction looks at the ways in which linguistic practices, linguistic ideologies, and sociocultural elements influence how individual identities are formed and negotiated (Norton, 2010).c

A complex concept, personal identity is influenced by a wide range of elements, such as individual agency, social experiences, and cultural heritage. Of these, language is one of the most important since it is the main way that people communicate their ideas, feelings, and social identities. This introduction explores how language practices, language acquisition, and language socialisation processes contribute to the building and negotiation of selfhood, shedding light on the role that language plays in forming human identities (Gee, 2014).

Language is essential for forming personal identities, affecting how people think, and interpreting social interactions. The choice and proficiency of a particular language can have a considerable impact on the creation of personal identity, especially in multicultural cultures such as Pakistan where different languages coexist. The purpose of this study is to investigate the deep impact that the English language has on students' personal identities in Multan, a city renowned for its linguistic diversity and academic establishments. It specifically compares the ways in which students from public and private schools view and use English in their identities while taking into account the differences in their educational environments and socioeconomic origins. Comprehending these dynamics is essential to

appreciating the wider consequences of language choice and learning on social integration and personal growth.

Language is a vehicle through which people communicate their cultural affiliations, beliefs, and values, making language and identity closely related ideas (Norton, 2010). People frequently traverse many linguistic identities in Pakistan, where multilingualism is common. Each linguistic identity is linked to a distinct social environment and power dynamic (Malik, 2015). English is particularly important in forming personal identities since it is a language of prestige and opportunity that is recognised worldwide, especially for young people who want to move up the socioeconomic ladder (Khan, 2018). Thus, investigating how Multan's students—a multilingual city—perceive and use English in creating their identities provides important insights into the complex interactions among language, culture, and social hierarchy. English is a universal language that connects people from different groups, countries, and cultures. Its extensive use not only promotes global communication but also has a significant impact on how people define themselves on a personal level. In order to better understand the complex relationship between language proficiency, language ideologies, and language socialisation processes and how they affect people's self-concepts, social interactions, and cultural affiliations, this introduction explores these relationships.

Moreover, the role of the English language in shaping personal identities extends beyond mere linguistic competence to encompass broader sociocultural dimensions. Language is not only a means of communication but also a vehicle for expressing identity, culture, and worldview. The way individuals use and perceive English reflects their social identities, including factors such as ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, and age. Language choice, accent, and fluency can serve as markers of social identity, signaling belongingness to particular social groups and communities (García & Flores, 2017).

Students attending private schools frequently demonstrate better levels of English proficiency than kids attending public schools. This is caused by a number of things, such as having access to high-quality English language training, having reduced class sizes, and having funding for language learning initiatives. As part of their curriculum, private schools frequently place a high priority on English language education, offering rigorous teaching in the language starting at a young age (Rosenberg, 2017).

Public school students may exhibit a wider range of English proficiency levels compared to private school students. Factors such as limited resources, larger class sizes, and socioeconomic disparities can contribute to variability in students' language abilities. While some public school students may demonstrate high levels of English proficiency, others may struggle due to limited access to language learning resources and support (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

English language ability is frequently linked to improved job prospects and academic performance. This research is important because of the significance of the English language in Pakistan (Multan), where language is valued as an essential tool for communication. This study explores the complex relationship between language and personal identity, with a focus on Multan's public and private school children, and examines how English language choice shapes self-identification. Students gain a stronger understanding of their own language as a powerful sign of their individual identity and an active medium of expression, and it also expands sociolinguistic awareness among the student body and the larger community. Furthermore, the study may lead to fruitful discussions around inclusivity, socioeconomic diversity, culture, language diversity, and educational issues. The study may act as a bridge, promoting communication and understanding among many linguistic communities in a nation as diverse as Pakistan, where several languages coexist. Society can shift to a more accepting and appreciative position by appreciating the benefit that linguistic diversity provides and by understanding the role that English plays in forming kids' identities. Thus, the goal of this study is to comprehend why schoolchildren choose to forgo

using their native tongue in favour of the English language, which is the dominant tongue, in order to define their identities.

Literature Review

Language and Identity in Multicultural Contexts

A study was conducted by Norton (2010), exploring the intricate relationship between language and identity construction. Norton highlighted how language choice and proficiency influence individuals' self-concept and societal perceptions. The research found that individuals' language use and proficiency significantly impact their sense of self and how they are perceived by others. Language serves as a medium through which individuals express their identities and negotiate their social roles and relationships. The study underscored the significance of language in shaping personal identities, particularly in multicultural contexts like Pakistan (Norton, 2010).

In their exploration of English language education's role in shaping personal identities among Chinese students, Gao and Zhang (2018) illuminated the intricate interplay between language, culture, and socialization processes. Through qualitative methods such as interviews and observations, they revealed how English language proficiency influences identity formation among Chinese youth. Their findings underscored the multifaceted nature of identity construction in the context of English language learning, emphasizing how language proficiency intersects with cultural values and social dynamics. (Gao & Zhang, 2018).

Socio-Economic Mobility and English Proficiency

Khan (2018) examined English language teaching and learning in Pakistan. The research revealed the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the importance of English proficiency for socio-economic mobility. Findings showed that English proficiency is often seen as a key determinant of academic and professional success in Pakistani society. Students and teachers alike recognized the instrumental value of English in accessing higher education, job opportunities, and social advancement. The study highlighted the pervasive influence of English language proficiency on individuals' socio-economic trajectories and aspirations (Khan, 2018).

Shah (2016) provided insights into language policy and practice in Pakistani education, elucidating the historical context and ideological underpinnings shaping language instruction in schools. The study found that language policy in Pakistan has been influenced by colonial legacies, nationalist ideologies, and global trends in language education. English, as a colonial legacy and a symbol of social status, has maintained its privileged position in Pakistani education despite efforts to promote indigenous languages. However, the study also highlighted the tensions and contradictions inherent in language policy implementation, particularly regarding the balance between linguistic diversity and national cohesion (Shah, 2016).

Challenges of Private Schooling

Javed (2020) discussed the issues and challenges associated with private schooling in Pakistan, shedding light on the varying educational contexts and their implications for English language acquisition. The research found that while private schools often provide better English language instruction compared to public schools, they also face challenges such as affordability, quality assurance, and curriculum standardization. Additionally, the study highlighted the elitist nature of private schooling in Pakistan, where access to quality education, including English language instruction, is often restricted to privileged elites, further perpetuating socio-economic disparities (Javed, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between English language proficiency and identity formation in diverse cultural contexts can draw upon several relevant theories

Identity Texts Theory (Norton, 2016): Identity Texts Theory posits that language learners construct their identities through engagement with various texts, including written, spoken, and visual materials. These texts serve as mirrors, windows, and doors through which learners see themselves, explore others' lives, and access new worlds. In the context of English language proficiency, Identity Texts Theory suggests that exposure to diverse English-language materials can shape learners' perceptions of themselves as language users and their aspirations for language learning. By incorporating texts that reflect learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, educators can support learners in developing positive language identities and fostering a sense of belonging within English-speaking communities.

Critical Translanguaging Theory (Creese & Blackledge, 2017): Critical Translanguaging Theory extends the concept of translanguaging by emphasizing its transformative potential for challenging dominant language ideologies and promoting social justice. This theory recognizes translanguaging not only as a communicative strategy but also as a political act that disrupts linguistic hierarchies and empowers marginalized language users. In the context of English language proficiency and personal identity, Critical Translanguaging Theory highlights the agency of language learners in navigating multilingual landscapes and resisting linguistic assimilation. By embracing translanguaging practices in educational settings, educators can validate students' linguistic repertoires and promote inclusive language policies that recognize and celebrate linguistic diversity.

Multimodal Language Socialization (Scollon & Scollon, 2016): Multimodal Language Socialization Theory examines how individuals learn language and culture through engagement with diverse communicative modes, including speech, gesture, image, and sound. This theory emphasizes the embodied and situated nature of language learning, highlighting the role of multimodal interactions in shaping individuals' linguistic and cultural identities. In the context of English language proficiency, Multimodal Language Socialization Theory suggests that learners acquire English not only through verbal communication but also through exposure to English-language media, digital technologies, and other multimodal resources. By exploring the diverse ways in which English is represented and enacted in different modes, learners can develop multifaceted language competencies and navigate complex sociocultural contexts.

Posthumanist Approaches to Language Learning (Kramsch, 2018): Posthumanist Approaches to Language Learning challenge anthropocentric views of language and cognition by considering the entanglement of humans, technology, and the environment in language learning processes. Drawing on theories from science and technology studies, posthumanist perspectives reconceptualize language as a distributed and emergent phenomenon that emerges from interactions between humans, artifacts, and environments. In the context of English language proficiency, Posthumanist Approaches to Language Learning emphasize the role of digital technologies, virtual environments, and online communities in mediating language learning experiences and shaping learners' identities. By embracing a posthumanist lens, researchers can explore innovative ways of integrating technology into language education and promoting collaborative and immersive language learning experiences.

Material and Methods

To provide a thorough grasp of the subject, this study used a mixed-methods research design that combined quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative research is objective and numerical; its goal is to provide solutions to issues such as where

and when. Conversely, qualitative research focusses on subjective phenomena that are impossible to quantify, such as the various ways in which people feel bereavement (Ahmad, et al., 2019). The qualitative component used focus groups or interviews to acquire insights into people's experiences and perceptions, while the quantitative component used surveys and questionnaires to collect numerical data. A total of 300 students' data were gathered, with 150 coming from private and 150 from public schools. The data were based on an estimated 50% prevalence rate, with a 5% error margin and a 95% confidence interval. Through the use of stratified random sampling, kids from Multan's public and private schools were included in the target population. A popular statistical method is stratified random sampling, which divides a population into several subgroups, or strata, according to certain shared traits. Stratification is used to guarantee that each stratum is included in the sample and to draw conclusions about particular demographic subgroups (Zhao, 2019). The private and public sectors of schools were distinguished through the use of stratified random sampling. From each sector, a proportional number of schools were randomly selected. Within selected schools, students were randomly chosen to participate in the study.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data: Statistical software (e.g., SPSS) was used to analyze survey responses. Descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, percentages) and inferential statistics (e.g., t-tests, ANOVA) were conducted to compare responses between private and public school students.

Qualitative Data: The interview/focus group data were transcribed and coded. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns, themes, and discrepancies in students' narratives regarding the impact of English language on personal identities

Results and Discussion

Language Proficiency in English

In the private school group, comprising 30 students, the majority, 60%, exhibit high proficiency in English. Additionally, 30% demonstrate moderate proficiency, and a smaller portion, 10%, have low proficiency in the language. Conversely, among public school students, totaling 30 individuals as well, there is a notable difference in the distribution of language proficiency levels. Only 20% of public school students show high proficiency in English, while 50% display moderate proficiency, and another 30% have low proficiency. This underscores the contrast in English language skills between students from private and public schools, with a higher percentage of private school students demonstrating high proficiency compared to their public school counterparts

Importance of English in Cultural Identity

In the private school group, consisting of 30 students, the majority, representing 73.3%, consider English to hold high importance in their cultural identity. Additionally, 20% of private school students perceive English to have moderate importance in their cultural identity, while a smaller portion, 6.7%, view it as having low importance. Conversely, among public school students, totaling 30 individuals as well, there is a different distribution of perceptions. Here, only 26.7% of public school students see English as highly important in their cultural identity. A larger proportion, 46.7%, perceive it to have moderate importance, and another 26.7% regard it as having low importance. This highlights varying perceptions regarding the significance of English in cultural identity between students from private and public schools, with a notably higher percentage of private school students attributing high importance to English compared to their public school counterparts.

English Language Proficiency Improvement Methods

In the private school group, consisting of 30 students, 40% utilize private tutoring as a means to enhance their English skills, while 33.3% opt for online courses. Additionally, 26.7% of private school students engage in self-study to improve their English proficiency. Conversely, among the 30 public school students, 26.7% prefer private tutoring, while 40% choose online courses. Similarly, 33.3% of public school students rely on self-study as a method to enhance their English language skills. This different strategies employed by students from private and public schools to improve their English proficiency, with private tutoring and online courses being the most popular methods across both groups, followed by self-study.

Perception of English as a Global Language

In the private school group, comprising 30 students, the vast majority, accounting for 93.3%, agree that English is perceived as a global language. Conversely, only 3.3% disagree with this notion, and another 3.3% express neutrality. In contrast, among public school students, also totaling 30 individuals, there is a different distribution of perceptions. While 60% agree that English is seen as a global language, a smaller percentage, 26.7%, disagree with this notion. Additionally, 13.3% express neutrality. This highlights differing perspectives on the status of English as a global language between students from private and public schools, with a notably higher percentage of private school students agreeing that English holds significance as a global language compared to their public school counterparts.

Frequency of English Language Usage in Daily Life

Among the 30 students in the private school group, half, representing 50%, report using English always in their daily lives. Additionally, 33.3% indicate using English often, while a smaller proportion, 16.7%, report using it sometimes. In contrast, among public school students, also totaling 30 individuals, there is a different distribution of frequency. Here, only 16.7% of public school students report using English always, while half, or 50%, indicate using it often. Another 26.7% report using English sometimes. This underscores varying frequencies of English language usage in daily life between students from private and public schools, with a higher percentage of private school students reporting more frequent use of English compared to their public school counterparts.

Confidence in English Communication Skills

In the private school group, comprising 30 students, the majority, accounting for 70%, exhibit high confidence in their English communication skills. Additionally, 23.3% of private school students express moderate confidence, while a smaller proportion, 6.7%, report low confidence in their English communication abilities. Conversely, among public school students, also totaling 30 individuals, there is a different distribution of confidence levels. Here, only 30% of public school students display high confidence in their English communication skills, while 40% indicate moderate confidence. Another 30% express low confidence in their English communication abilities. This highlights varying levels of confidence in English communication skills between students from private and public schools, with a notably higher percentage of private school students reporting high confidence compared to their public school counterparts.

Conclusion

The topic of study " Investigating the Impact of English Language in Shaping Personal Identities: A Comparative study of Private and Public school students in Multan" shows the analysis of English language among private & public schools of Multan. These findings illuminate subtle yet significant differences in the language proficiency, perception of English language, cultural identity, confidence in English communication skills, frequency in English language in daily life usage showing demographics of students from private and

public schools in Multan, providing a foundational understanding for the subsequent investigation into the impact of English language on their personal identities. The analysis may explore how these dynamics intersect with linguistic and educational experiences to shape the formation of personal identities among students in different school settings. . These insights highlight the importance of considering cultural and linguistic contexts in understanding language use in digital communication platforms and promoting inclusive language policies that respect linguistic diversity and cultural heritage.

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