Understanding the Relationship between Identity and Motivation in Second Language Learning: A Study of Pakistani Learners

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Abstract

This study explores at the relationship learners' identities have with their motivation to acquire English as a second language (L2) in Pakistan. Data were acquired using a qualitative study approach, including semi-structured interviews with focus group discussions with Pakistani college students from various linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The findings indicate that cultural, social, and economic aspects influence learners' identities, which in turn shape their motivation towards learning English. Parental and teacher attitudes, societal expectations, and the perceived usefulness of English for personal and professional development are all important motivators. The study underlines the necessity of creating culturally responsive educational environments that incorporate students' identities into the learning process, hence boosting motivation and building a positive view of oneself. The results highlight the need of inclusive educational policy and teacher training programs that address the relationship between identity and motivation. By building conducive learning environments, participants can greatly improve English language learning results in Pakistan. The research presented here adds to the overall understanding of L2 learning dynamics and makes practical recommendations for improving language teaching in culturally diverse contexts.

Keywords: Pakistan, identity, motivation, educational environment, attitudes

INTRODUCTION

A proficiency in languages beyond one's mother tongue has become increasingly important in our globalized world. It has become increasingly necessary for individuals worldwide to acquire proficiency in a second language (L2). It is absolutely necessary for learners to be proficient in at least one language other than their mother tongue in the day and age of globalization (Shahidzade & Mazdayasna, 2022). English has risen to the status of an international lingua franca, making it imperative for them to master another language. English, as the main global language, has boosted the need for second or foreign language acquisition around the world (Crystal 2003). As a result of this imperative, the demand for language learning has risen across diverse contexts, driven by academic, professional, and

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personal development goals. Within this landscape, Pakistan emerges as a compelling locus for examining the dynamics of second language acquisition, with English reigning as the dominant language in the educational, professional, and societal spheres.

Learners' identities are linked to their motivation to study a second language, especially English in Pakistan. Identity in language learning involves cultural background, personal objectives, and social ties, all of which impact one's motivation and approach to adopting a new language (Shahidzade & Mazdayasna, 2022). Language learning, according to the constructivist perspective, is more than just a cognitive activity; it is also profoundly ingrained in the learner's social and cultural context. This viewpoint holds that identity and language are inextricably intertwined, influencing how people perceive and participate in the learning process (Tian & McCafferty, 2022).

Regarding Pakistan's multilingual setting, it is crucial to understand the relationship between identity and motivation in language learning. For language learners who switch between their native tongues and English, the dominance of English offers both opportunities and disadvantages. In light of the sociocultural elements that influence this dynamic, the purpose of this study is to investigate how the identities of Pakistani learners impact their drive to acquire English.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

English has achieved a status of global language over the past few centuries it leads an English Language to be learned and spoken as a second or foreign language in many countries (McKeown & Ramadori, 2022). The formation of learner identities has a major impact on the motivation of language acquisition in Pakistan. Speaking multiple languages and being multilingual are not just signs of personal fulfillment; they also reflect social and power dynamics. Learners' identities are molded by a multitude of factors, such as social interactions, media, and educational environments, all of which together have an influence on their motivation to acquire English.

According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, anxiety prevents language acquisition while happy emotional states help it (Bailey & Fahad, 2021). However, the sociocultural facets of identity that influence language acquisition are not adequately taken into account by this theory. This study contends that a thorough understanding of second language acquisition (SLA) requires a comprehension of the internal cognitive and emotional

processes of learners interacting with their environments. Learners' motivations and identities are greatly influenced by cultural attitudes toward English, familial expectations, and status.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Creating a supportive language learning environment is critical for increasing learner motivation. According to research, improving students' social competency and creating a friendly classroom environment can boost motivation (Wu, Yang, Liu, & Liu, 2022). Many students in Pakistan lack appropriate integrative motivation for learning English, which is frequently caused by external factors such as societal prejudice and ineffective teacher-student interactions.

Effective language instruction requires teachers to grasp cultural differences and be able to make students feel appreciated. This study investigates the relationship between learner identities and motivation to learn English in Pakistan. It looks into Pakistani college students' attitudes of their desire to study English, as well as how non-native teachers' tactics affect their students' motivation and sense of respect.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How does a learner's identity impact their motivation to learn English as a second language in Pakistan?

- What sociocultural factors affect college students in Pakistan's desire to learn English?

- How do students' experiences and interactions in classrooms affect their motivation to study English?

- What effects does the connection between motivation and identity have on teaching language methods in Pakistan?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To investigate how Pakistani students' identities impact their motivation to learn English as a second language.

- To establish the sociocultural factors affecting the motivation of college students in Pakistan to acquire English.

- To look into how classroom interactions and experiences impact students' motivation to learn English.

- To make suggestions for language-teaching strategies that take into account the many

identities and motivations of Pakistani students.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study has multiple implications, providing insightful information and useful tools for leaders, educators, and students. Firstly, improving language learning techniques can be achieved by comprehending the connection between learners' identities and their drive to acquire English as a second language. By creating more effective teaching strategies that are suited to the various requirements and backgrounds of Pakistani students, educators can enhance language acquisition results. In addition, Pakistani policymakers in the field of education can benefit from the findings. It is possible to build curriculum and educational practices that are more inclusive and supportive, resulting in a more favorable learning environment, by emphasizing the socio- cultural and identity-related aspects that influence language acquisition.

The study underlines the significance of cultural identity in the educational process and the need for a more culturally appropriate learning environment. It implies that by better comprehending the relationship between motivation and identity, teacher preparation programs can be enhanced and more productive teaching strategies can be implemented. The study also helps students become more empowered since it shows how appreciating their identities and cultural backgrounds can increase students' motivation and self-worth, which in turn improves academic achievement and fosters personal development. The results can be used to create more specialized language programs, allowing for interventions that support students in overcoming challenges and achieving their language learning objectives. This study is noteworthy because it contributes to the body of knowledge in academia and provides workable answers to enhance Pakistani educational policies and practices, which will ultimately raise the standard of English language learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the intricate process of language acquisition, which is impacted by a wide range of factors, learner identity and motivation are vital. To effectively build language education strategies in the context of second language (L2) learning in Pakistan, it is imperative to comprehend the interplay between these categories. With an emphasis on the Pakistani context, this review of the literature summarizes the body of knowledge regarding the relation among learner identity, motivation, and second language acquisition.

Learner identity refers to how people perceive themselves as language learners, which is influenced by cultural, social, and personal variables (Norton, 2000). Learners in Pakistan struggle between several linguistic and cultural identities, such as their native tongue, Urdu, and English. Studies by Shahidzade and Mazdayasna (2022) underline the importance of knowing how these identities influence learners' willingness to learn English as a second language.

Parents' and teachers' attitudes are among the many factors that impact L2 learners' motivation in Pakistan (Wadho, 2016). Another important component is the L2 Motivational Self System, which consists of learners' ideal selves and attitudes (Islam, 2013). In this context, the desire to become proficient in English and the possible influence of English on national identity and interests are especially significant (Yaqoob, Ahmed, & Arshad, 2014). These results imply that a learner's identity and motivation to acquire a second language in Pakistan are strongly related, with relational and personal variables both being important.

Motivation, an important predictor of language learning success, is inextricably tied to learner identity (Gardner, 2010). Integrative motivation, which incorporates a desire to connect with the target language group, and instrumental motivation, which is motivated by pragmatic goals, are two widely studied motivating elements (Dörnyei, 2009). In Pakistan, the desire of students to learn English is determined by a complex interplay of socio-cultural and educational elements. Learners may be motivated by hopes for social mobility, access to higher education, and career possibilities.

The socio-cultural context influences learners' attitudes and incentives toward language learning. In Pakistan, where English is connected with status and socioeconomic success, societal norms and expectations shape learners' conceptions of the language (Tian & McCafferty, 2022). According to research, learners from marginalized backgrounds may face difficulties to English language acquisition as a result of socioeconomic inequality. In contrast, learners from wealthy backgrounds may demonstrate higher levels of integrative motivation as a result of their exposure to English-speaking surroundings.

In Pakistan, the significance of learners' identities in second language acquisition is a multifaceted and intricate subject. Yaqoob (2014) and Khalid (2016) both emphasize Pakistani learners' strong motivating impacts and good attitudes about learning English, focusing on the promotional and preventive variables that influence this motivation.

Ambreen investigates the impact of English as a second language on Pakistani students' identities, highlighting the need of policies that help students identify as good Muslims, Pakistanis, and global citizen (Ambreen, 2015). By examining how Pakistani primary school teachers acquire their teaching skills and develop their English teacher identities, Channa adds to this problem. She contends that they do so by drawing on their own positive English learning experiences (Channa, 2022).

It has been discovered that a variety of sociocultural influences affect the motivation to learn a language. Actively participating in cultural events is a crucial component in the relationship between cultural awareness and motivation as well as competency (Brainee, 2024). This is further supported by Kouritzin's identification of national variations in language learning beliefs, attitudes, and motivations, with learners in France and Canada largely demonstrating instrumental and integrative drive and those in Japan displaying social capital motivation (Kouritzin, 2009). These results highlight the intricate interactions between cultural, societal, and individual factors that influence motivation to learn a language.

Sociocultural variables have a big impact on Pakistani language learners' motivation. Ramzan (2023) and Akram (2013) both emphasize the influence of socioeconomic class, with students from higher SES backgrounds exhibiting more optimistic motivation. Ramzan (2023) also mentions the impact of urban upbringing and ethnicity on the ambition to study English. Khan (2024) highlights the importance of social and cognitive elements, especially the impact of instrumental social factors like career prospects and success. Islam (2013) emphasizes even more how relational elements, such as national interest, ideal L2 selves, and L2 learning attitudes, shape motivation. Together, these studies highlight the intricate interactions between sociocultural elements that influence Pakistani language learners' willingness to learn languages. Pakistani students believe that learning English will facilitate their ability to communicate globally and will also foster harmony and intercultural communication (Coleman, 2010).

Even though current research sheds insight on the relationships between learner identity, motivation, and language learning results, a number of problems remain unsolved. First and foremost, longitudinal research is required to study the long-term implications of learner identity on motivation and language acquisition proficiency in Pakistani settings. Furthermore, research that focus on the views of underprivileged learners—such as those from low-income or rural communities—can provide valuable insights into the sociocultural

dynamics of language learning.

Moreover, the significance of integrating students' cultural and linguistic identities into language teaching methods is becoming increasingly acknowledged (Duchêne & Heller, 2012). Subsequent investigations ought to delve into inventive instructional methodologies that foster inclusive language learning environments and enable students to adeptly manage their many identities.

The literature review concludes by highlighting the intricate interactions that exist in the Pakistani setting between learner identity, motivation, and language learning results. Teachers and legislators may improve language education programs and ensure that all students in Pakistan have fair access to English language competency by filling up research gaps and implementing culturally sensitive teaching methods.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
RESEARCH DESIGN

This study uses a qualitative research approach to explore the connection between learners' identity and motivation to acquire a second language (L2) in the context of Pakistan. Qualitative approaches are ideal for examining complex topics like identity and motivation because they allow for a thorough examination of participants' viewpoints and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The qualitative approach enables a more detailed understanding of the socio-cultural elements that influence learners' attitudes and behaviors toward L2 learning.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study will be Pakistani college students engaged in English language classes at various educational institutions throughout the country. A purposive sampling strategy will be used to recruit individuals from a variety of backgrounds, including linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic characteristics. The sample size will be decided using the data saturation principle, which states that data collection will continue until the analysis yields no new themes or insights (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

DATA COLLECTION

Data is gathered using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Semi-structured interviews allow for more flexibility in questioning while ensuring that crucial topics like as identity and motivation are addressed (Fontana and Frey, 2005). Focus group

talks allow members to communicate with one another, encouraging a deeper investigation of common experiences and viewpoints (Kruege & Casey, 2014). Both approaches will be audio- recorded with the participants' permission and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis will be used to examine the qualitative data gathered through interviews and focus group discussions. Thematic analysis is the process of detecting patterns, themes, categories within data in order to analyze participant narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2006).The analysis will include familiarization with the data, coding, topic building, and interpretation. To increase the legitimacy and dependability of the findings, rigorous methods such as member checking and peer debriefing will be adopted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The ethical considerations will be prioritized during the research procedure. All participants will provide informed consent, and their anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the reporting and dissemination of the findings. Participants will be notified that they have the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any moment without consequences. The research will follow the ethical norms set by relevant institutional review boards and professional bodies.

LIMITATIONS

Despite their positive attributes, qualitative research methodologies have inherent limits. Qualitative study findings may not be generalizable to larger populations since they are context- specific and rely on subjective interpretations. Furthermore, qualitative data analysis can be time- consuming and resource-intensive, necessitating meticulous attention to detail and reflexivity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study's theoretical framework incorporates a number of important theories and ideas from the domains of identity studies, sociolinguistics, and second language acquisition (SLA). In the context of learning a second language in Pakistan, these theories offer a theoretical prism through which to investigate the connection between learners' identity and motivation.

SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY

Lev Vygotsky has been associated with developing sociocultural theory, which highlights the significance of social interactions and cultural environments for cognitive growth and learning (Vygotsky, 1978). This idea holds that meaningful encounters with people in social contexts, where students negotiate meaning and co-construct knowledge, are how language acquisition happens. Sociocultural theory offers a framework for comprehending how learners' identities are affected by their social and cultural environments and how these identities affect their motivation to acquire a second language in the context of this study.

IDENTITY THEORY

Identity theory, first put forth by Erik Erikson and then expanded upon by James Marcia and others, holds that people discover who they are by committing to and exploring a variety of social roles and identities (Marcia, 1980). Identity is complex and includes social, linguistic, cultural, and ethnic identities, among others. When it comes to influencing their ideas, convictions, and driving forces toward the target language, learners' identities are extremely important. This theory offers a framework for comprehending how language users' identities affect learners' motivation to pick up a second language.

THE L2 MOTIVATIONAL SELF SYSTEM

Zoltán Dörnyei developed the L2 Motivational Self-System; a theoretical framework that clarifies the intricate relationship between learners' ought-to selves, ideal selves, and L2 learning motivation (Dörnyei, 2005). This theory holds that learners' motivation to acquire a second language is impacted by both their sense of responsibility or obligation to learn the language and their idealistic picture of themselves as fluent speakers of the target language. The L2 Motivational Self System offers a paradigm for comprehending how learners' identities and self- concepts affect their motivation to learn English as a second language in Pakistan in the setting of this study.

In the context of second language learning in Pakistan, the relationship between learners' identity and motivation may be examined through a comprehensive lens according to the theoretical framework discussed earlier. This research attempts to provide a detailed understanding of the socio-cultural elements those impact learners' attitudes and behaviors toward English language acquisition in Pakistan by using ideas from identity theory,

sociocultural theory, and the L2 Motivational Self System.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis approach entailed reviewing the qualitative data collected from semi- structured interviews and focus group discussions with Pakistani college students enrolled in English language classes. Thematic analysis was used to uncover patterns, themes, and categories in the data, allowing for a thorough examination of participants' views on the relationship between identity and motivation in second language acquisition.

Initially, all interview transcripts and focus group recordings were read several times to become familiar with the information being presented. This phase allowed the researchers to immerse themselves in the data and obtain insight into the breadth and depth of the participants' responses.

After that, a methodical coding procedure was used to divide the data into distinct sections. This entailed giving pertinent text passages that encapsulated important ideas about learners' identities and motivations for acquiring a second language (L2) identifying terms or codes. In order to ensure accuracy and consistency across data sources, codes were applied to focus discussions in groups as well as individual interviews. The coded data segments started to reveal trends after coding. Themes were recurrent themes or patterns that mirrored the participants' underlying attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of L2 learning. The procedure of grouping relevant codes together and looking at the relationships between them was used to identify the themes.

After identifying the themes, the researchers proceeded with an interpretation procedure to determine the relevance of the results with respect to the research questions and objectives. This required closely examining each theme's content, taking into account the environment in which it first appeared, and making links to previously published works and theoretical frameworks. Peer debriefing and member verification were done to increase the reliability and credibility of the results. In order to confirm the precision and applicability of the interpretations, member verification entailed sending summaries of the themes found back to the participants. Peer debriefing entailed getting feedback from peers or other researchers to make sure the analysis was objective and comprehensive.

Rich insights into the relationship between learners' identity and motivation in the context of L2 acquisition in Pakistan were provided by the data analysis. The themes that

have been identified offer a sophisticated comprehension of the socio-cultural elements that influence learners' attitudes and actions about acquiring the English language. The research paper's later sections will go into more detail about these findings, offering insightful information to educators, decision-makers, and other experts in the field.

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to explore the complex relationship between learners' identity and motivation when they were studying English in Pakistan as a second language (L2). Researcher investigated how these elements combined affect Pakistani students' L2 learning experiences, drawing on the L2 Motivational Self System, Sociocultural Theory, Norton's Theory of Identity and Investment, and the difference between integrative and instrumental motivation.

IDENTITY'S EFFECT ON L2 MOTIVATION

The findings highlight the essential part that learners' identities play in determining how motivated they are to learn English. Pakistani students frequently juggle many identities, including that of devout Muslims, law-abiding citizens of their country, and capable international citizens. These identities have a big influence on their motivation since students who strongly identify with these roles typically have more integrative motivation. They see English as a way to interact with larger worldwide communities and cultures, in addition to a tool for academic and professional progress.

Yaqoob (2014) and Khalid (2016) emphasize the interaction of preventive and promotional variables, pointing out that Pakistani learners have strong motivating impacts and good attitudes toward learning English. These studies corroborate the research's findings, indicating that learners' motivation to learn English is fueled by their need to establish a positive social identity in both their local community and the global context. This is consistent with Norton's (2000) claim that learners' motivation to negotiate and develop their identities is intimately related to their investment in L2 learning.

THE L2 MOTIVATIONAL SELF SYSTEM'S FUNCTION

One of the main factors influencing learners' motivation has been shown to be the Ideal L2 Self in the L2 Motivational Self System. A distinct vision of themselves as future fluent English speakers motivates many Pakistani students to acquire the language. According to Dörnyei's (2009) theory, learners will be more driven to accomplish their goals

if they can envision their future selves more vividly. This idealized self-concept serves as a motivating factor.

Taught to L2 Self is also quite important, particularly in light of Pakistani culture's strong societal expectations. Students frequently feel pressured to live up to these expectations, which, depending on the support and pressure they receive from their social environment, can have a beneficial or bad effect on their motivation. Learners' motivation is further influenced by the L2 Learning Experience, which includes classroom dynamics and instructor support. This emphasizes the significance of establishing a supportive and stimulating learning environment.

EXPECTATIONS AND OUTSIDE FACTORS

Learners' motivation and sense of self are greatly impacted by attitudes regarding English and the larger English-speaking community. Learners' desire and willingness to commit to second language acquisition are increased when they have positive attitudes toward English teachers, the learning environment, and peer relationships. On the other hand, unfavorable encounters might sap motivation and cause one to separate from the English-speaking population.

The perspectives of educators and parents have a significant impact. As Wadho (2016) notes, these important people's encouragement and support are crucial in determining how motivated students are. Positive encouragement from parents and teachers can boost pupils' self-confidence and willingness to learn English, whereas negative attitudes or a lack of support might demotivate them.

INTRINSIC AND INSTRUMENTAL MOTIVATION

Intrinsic and instrumental motives are equally important in the context of Pakistani learners. Integrative motivation, driven by a desire to integrate into the English-speaking community and accept its cultural norms, is high among students who perceive English as a means of achieving global citizenship. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, is common among people who see English as a path to scholastic success, job advancement, and social mobility.

Shahbaz (2012) stresses the linked nature of these motivational components, arguing that thorough understandings of L2 motivation must take into account both integrative and instrumental features. This dual motive is obvious among Pakistani students, who frequently

balance their desire for personal and professional development with the need to conform to global cultural norms.

IMPLICATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

The results of the research have important ramifications for Pakistan's educational systems. Educators and policymakers must understand the diverse character of learners' identities and motives. Creating a supportive and culturally sensitive learning environment that recognizes and promotes students' identities can boost motivation and participation in L2 learning. In order to effectively teach to both integrative and instrumental motives, teachers must be trained to recognize the variety of motivational elements influencing their students. Students can be more motivated if they are given the chance to visualize their Ideal L2 Self and are encouraged to have a good self-concept.

In addition, parents should be kept aware of the importance of their role in their children's L2 learning process and their involvement should be encouraged. Schools should conduct workshops and seminars to educate parents and offer them with techniques to help their children acquire language at home.

CONCLUSION

This study focuses on the complicated interplay among identity, motivation, and L2 learning among Pakistani students. Educators may develop more successful and inclusive language learning settings by better understanding and addressing the numerous aspects that influence learners' motivation. Future research should continue to investigate these associations, particularly in varied educational environments and among diverse learner populations, in order to better guide educational methods and policies targeted at improving L2 learning results.

The intricate relationship between learners' identities and their motivation to acquire English as a second language (L2) in Pakistan was examined in this study. In-depth understanding of the sociocultural elements and individual experiences that influence Pakistani students' attitudes and motives toward studying English was made possible by a qualitative research approach that included semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

The findings suggest that learners' cultural, social, and economic backgrounds have a major influence on their motivation to learn English. The relationship between a student's identity and their desire to attain English competence is complex, reflecting both inner and

extrinsic motivators. Parental and instructor attitudes, social expectations, and the perceived utility of English in personal and professional domains have all been shown to have a significant impact on learners' motivation.

Additionally, the study emphasizes the value of an inclusive educational environment that recognizes and incorporates students' cultural identities into the language learning process. Such an environment not only boosts motivation, but it also fosters a good self-concept among students, resulting in improved learning outcomes. This is especially important in Pakistan, where English is used not only for instruction but also as a doorway to academic and professional opportunities. The research emphasizes the need of culturally responsive educational policies and teaching techniques that support students' identities. Creating a learning environment that values and includes varied cultural backgrounds can dramatically increase students' enthusiasm and involvement in learning English. Furthermore, the study recommends that teacher training programs stress the significance of identity in language learning, preparing educators to meet the unique obstacles that students encounter.

Subsequently, this study advances knowledge of the dynamic relationship between motivation and identity in Pakistani second language learners. For educators and legislators seeking to increase the efficacy of English language instruction, it offers useful suggestions. By understanding and addressing the cultural and identity-related elements that influence motivation, stakeholders can foster more inclusive and supportive educational settings, resulting in better language learning results for Pakistani students.

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