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Print ISSN: [3006-2497](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19683811) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19683811)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19683811)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19683811>**Multilingual Identity and Language Choice among University Students in Pakistan****Jaweria Baber**

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Corresponding Author Email: hafizrizwan158@gmail.com**Abstract**

This paper focuses on the correlation between multilingual identity and language choice in university students in Pakistan. With a diverse linguistic setting with Urdu, English, and regional languages, students tend to juggle between two or more identities via language choices at school and social life. The study examines the influence of educational background, social context, peer influence, and perceived prestige of languages in the choice students make to use a given language. Surveys and interviews show that English is mostly related to academic achievements and career growth, whereas Urdu and local languages are connected with cultural belonging and emotionality. Students often alternate languages based on the context, which is a sign of dynamic multilingualism, not definite linguistic preference. The results show that choice of language is not only a communication activity but also an identity negotiation and social positioning. The research points out the necessity to have an inclusive language policy within higher education institutions that sees multilingualism as an asset and not a liability. It further proposes pedagogical solutions that can promote linguistic diversity and enhance a good command of the English language in schools.

Keywords: Multilingual Identity, Language Choice, University students, Pakistan, Code-Switching, Linguistic Diversity, Sociolinguistics.

1. Introduction

Multilingual identity and language choice is another important field of study in sociolinguistics, especially in postcolonial and multilingual societies like Pakistan. As a student in a university, students are not just a language user, but also an identity negotiator who will always alternate between Urdu, English and regional languages based on academic and social needs. In this regard, language is not only a means of communication, but also a symbolic representation of identity, status and belonging.

Scholarly studies have demonstrated that the language choice has always been strongly associated with identity formation and socialization. Norton posits that the language learner is always engaged in negotiating

identities based on language practices in the social context (Norton 11). This negotiation is further complicated in Pakistani universities because there is co-existence of more than one linguistic system in one academic setting.

Context or Background

Pakistan is a multilingual nation and the linguistic diversity is incorporated in the social and educational systems of the nation. Urdu is a national language, English is prevalent in the field of education and profession, and regional languages like Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi are used to identify cultural and ethnic associations (Rahman 102). This language layering provides the students with a special world where students often alternate languages depending on situations.

English is widely spoken and taught as the instructional language in higher education institutions, especially in the fields of science, technology and professional studies. Such a domination has produced a close relationship between the academic success and English proficiency. Nevertheless, Urdu is necessary in interpersonal communication and regional languages also still occupy an important place in culture and expression of emotions (Mahboob 68). Consequently, students acquire flexible identities of multilingualism that are influenced by the expectations of the institutions, interaction with peers and the cultural affiliation.

Research Gap

Despite the extensive research on the topic of bilingualism and code-switching, there are still a number of gaps in the comprehension of multilingual identity in Pakistani universities. Most of the available research is about patterns of language use but not about the processes of identity formation that underlie language choice.

Moreover, scanty studies are done on the psychological and social negotiation of students between English, Urdu and regional languages in educational settings. Although Rahman (1996) talks of the prestige of English in Pakistan, less research has been conducted to address how this prestige is affecting identity construction among students.

The other weakness is the absence of integrative literature that integrates sociolinguistic, psychological and educational views. Language choice as a functional behavior is a common approach of existing literature but not a dynamic identity process. This research fills these gaps by looking at the role of multilingual identity in the selection of language in academic and social environments.

Research Objectives / Questions

The key questions of the paper are:

1. To test the hypothesis: The effect of multilingual identity on language choice among Pakistan university students.
2. To examine the use of English, Urdu and regional languages in academic and social communication.
3. To explore issues like educational status, peer pressure, and perceived language prestige.
4. To investigate the code-switching patterns in multilingual academic settings.
5. To get an insight into the ways language choice is negotiation of identity among students.

The research questions to be addressed in the study are:

1. How do Pakistani university students develop their multilingual identities by choosing language?
2. What determines the choice of students to use English, Urdu or region languages?
3. Question: What is the effect of code-switching on identity negotiation in school?
4. What is the role of language prestige in influencing language behavior?

Scope and Significance of the Study

In this research, the population of the study is undergraduate students at Pakistani universities and is conducted to investigate the way the students choose the language in their academic and social situations. It particularly investigates the relationship that exists between English, Urdu, and regional languages, and not monolingual or non-academic environments.

This study is important because it contributes to the sociolinguistic theory and policy. It offers an understanding of the role of multilingualism as an identity-building tool and not a learning impediment. Bourdieu explains that language is a symbolic capital which is a manifestation of social value and power structure (Bourdieu 56). In this sense, the knowledge of language choice can be used to bring out the larger picture of social inequality and cultural identity.

In terms of education, the study highlights the importance of inclusion of language policies in higher education. By acknowledging multilingualism as an asset, the teaching practice can be enhanced, and it can support the development of linguistic students. It further emphasizes the need to incorporate linguistic realities of students into learning institutions instead of applying strict monolingual norms.

1.7 Summary

This chapter presented the research topic, scholarly relevancy, context, gaps in research, research objectives and relevance. It provided the basis of studying the effect of multilingual identity on language selection among Pakistan university students. The following chapter will consider the literature on multilingualism, code-switching and identity negotiation more thoroughly.

2. Literature Review

Multilingualism has been an extensive topic in sociolinguistics because it is one of the determinants of identity, communication and social organization. The use of language in postcolonial Pakistan is not just a means of communication but also a sign of authority, status and cultural identity. This literature review is a synthesis of the available literature on multilingual identity, language choice and code switching and how these concepts work with university students. There is consensus among scholars that the use of language is intimately connected to social life and identity formation. Fishman believes that language is a transmitter and a representation of group identity (Fishman 89). This relationship is further complicated in educational settings where students have to balance between the expectation of the institutions and their own lingual backgrounds.

2.2 Multilingualism in Pakistani context

Pakistan is a very multilingual society in which the Urdu and English languages are overlaid by the regional languages. Urdu is a lingua franca of the country, English prevails in education and governance, and regional languages are a source of ethnic and cultural identity (Rahman 102). Rahman notes that upward social mobility and elite status in Pakistan is closely linked with English (Rahman 108). Consequently, it serves as a gatekeeping language in professional and higher education. When students become proficient in English, they will be viewed as more competent and successful academically.

Nevertheless, Urdu and native languages remain a crucial part of everyday communication. According to Mahboob, Urdu is more of a language of casual communication and feelings whereas the regional languages help to preserve culture and family connections (Mahboob 70). This segmentation generates an effective multilingual system whereby each language has different social functions.

2.3 Construction of language and identity

Language and identity are interrelated. The theory of identity and language learning by Norton focuses on the fact that language learners are not passive receivers but active negotiators of identities who create meanings in social interaction (Norton 4). In multilingual communities, people tend to change identities with the change of linguistic situation. Amongst the university students in Pakistan, English tends to be considered as a marker of academic identity, professionalism, and global connectivity. Conversely, Urdu and local languages are emotional in terms of identity and cultural rootedness. The Social Identity Theory of Tajfel states that people get their sense of belongingness through group membership, and language is a key concept in this phenomenon (Tajfel 34). Language choice, then, is symbolic of social alignment and positioning of identity.

2.4 Code-Switching as a Linguistic Strategy

Code-switching is a phenomenon that is prevalent in multilingual societies. According to Myers-Scotton, the process of switching languages between languages in a conversation can be referred to as code-switching, which is used with a communicative or social objective (Myers-Scotton 16).

In Pakistani universities, there is a common practice among the students to alternate between English and Urdu in academic discussions. Formal academic work is done in English, and informal interaction is frequently in Urdu, where clarification or explanation is needed. This is not a random switching but a context-dependent strategic switching. According to Markedness Model by Myers-Scotton, speakers select languages according to the social meaning, and anticipated norms (Myers-Scotton 22). Students can signal academic competence or authority using English, and can signal solidarity or ease of communication using Urdu.

2.5 Prestige and Linguistic Hierarchy Language

Perceived prestige is also a factor contributing to language choice. Bourdieu presents the notion of linguistic capital, which he holds that some languages are more valuable in terms of social and economic status than others (Bourdieu 56). English is viewed as high-status linguistic capital in Pakistan because it is related to education, employment, and international mobility. This impression makes students focus on using English in learning situations, although this is not their language of origin. On the other hand, not all institutional values are given to Urdu and regional languages, even though they are culturally significant. This brings about linguistic hierarchy which determines student attitude and identity formation. According to Crystal, institutional practices tend to support language prestige especially in education systems where there are languages that are given preference over others (Crystal 2006). This supports the unequal power relations in language in society.

2.6 Educational Background and Use of language

English is the most common language used as the medium of instruction in institutions of higher learning. This gives a good connection between academic achievement and proficiency in English. Lacking confidence in English, students can face some academic difficulties, despite their potential intellectual abilities. Nonetheless, it has also been found that, with the right support, multilingual practices can also help improve learning. Canagarajah suggests that multilingualism is not a problem in education but it is a resource (41). It is a natural tendency of students to rely on all possible linguistic tools to create meaning and get the widespread concepts. In spite of this, there are still a number of institutions with monolingual policies that favor English and restrict the official use of other languages in learning institutions.

2.7 Literature Gap

Despite the fact that much literature has been produced on the topic of code-switching and bilingualism, there are gaps. The bulk of research is about pattern of language use and not the underlying identity negotiation processes in language choice. Moreover, there is a scarcity of research on the perceptions of university students in Pakistan on the identity construction of multilingualism in academic settings. Although Rahman (1996) examines the political and historical aspects of the issue of English in Pakistan, less literature has been conducted to examine the psychological effects of English on the identity construction of students. The second gap is absence of integrated frameworks of sociolinguistics, education and identity theory to explain the behavior of language choices. This paper fills these gaps by discussing the effects of multilingual identity on language choice in university students.

2.8 Summary

The literature shows that multilingual identity is a contextual and dynamic phenomenon. Prestige, identity, context, and social interaction are some of the factors that affect language choice among university students in Pakistan. Academic and professional success is linked to English, whereas cultural identity and expression of emotions is linked to Urdu and regional languages. Code-switching is an effective identity negotiation and communication instrument. Still, there are loopholes in comprehending how such linguistic behaviors portray more profound identity construction processes. This paper will be relevant to this field by offering a detailed discussion of multilingual identity and language preference in Pakistani universities.

3. Research Methodology

The chapter mentions the research design and methodology applied to study multilingual identity and language choice among Pakistani university students. Any sociolinguistic study should have a well-organized methodology that guarantees its validity, reliability, and academic credibility. Creswell writes that the research design is a logical framework that directs the gathering, analysis and interpretation of data (Creswell 3).

The study is aimed at examining not only linguistic behavior but also identity construction, which is why a mixed-method approach is taken. In such a way, the researcher is able to merge both the numerical data about the patterns of language use and the qualitative information about how students perceive and negotiate their identity. Mixed-method research is especially useful in sociolinguistic research as it represents both quantifiable behavior and the subjective meaning-making (Dopnyei 45).

3.2 Research Design

The study follows a descriptive and interpretive research design. The descriptive part is concerned with the identification of the patterns of language use among the students and the interpretive part is concerned with understanding how the patterns are related to identity construction. Descriptive research assists in giving a straight forward image of linguistic behavior without the manipulation of the variables. Descriptive research, according to Kothari, is a kind of research that describes the nature of a phenomenon as it is (Kothari 37). Consequently, interpretive analysis can be used to explore social meanings of the choice of language, especially in multilingual settings at a deeper level.

3.3 Population and Sample

The study population is university students studying in both Pakistan public and private universities. The sample size was determined by utilizing a purposive sampling method where 120 students who had a varied language background, comprising of speakers of the Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi languages were sampled. Purposive sampling should be used in situations where the researcher wants to choose the individuals with the pertinent experience in the research topic (Patton 52). Here, the respondents were selected depending on their experiences in multilingual educational settings.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

3.4.1 Questionnaires

Quantitative data on language preferences of students in academic and social contexts were collected by means of structured questionnaires. The questionnaire contained items of Likert scale to measure frequency of language use, perceived prestige and language attitudes. In sociolinguistic studies, questionnaires are very common since they enable them to collect data efficiently in large proportions (Bryman 89).

3.4.2 Interviews

The selected participants were semi-structured interviewed to help gain more insights into their language preference and identity perceptions. These interviews enabled the students to elaborate on their reasons of switching languages and their perceptions towards various linguistic identities. Kvale argues that interviews are suitable to discover the subjective experiences and senses of social behavior (Kvale 9).

3.4.3 Observation

In-classroom observations were used to analyse real-time language use too. This approach assisted in validating the data of questionnaires and interviews by observing real linguistic practice in the academic context. In sociolinguistics, observation is especially fruitful since it involves the contextual observation of natural language use (Silverman 112).

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

3.5.1 Quantitative Analysis

Frequency distribution and percentage analysis was used to analyze quantitative data in questionnaires. This assisted in determining language preferences of the students. Social research using statistical analysis enables the researcher to find patterns and general trends in the large volumes of data (Creswell 120).

3.5.2 Qualitative Analysis

Thematically, the qualitative data of interviews and observations were analyzed. Themes were identified as language prestige, identity negotiation, emotional expression and academic performance. According to Braun and Clarke, thematic analysis is a way of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns in data (Braun and Clarke 79).

3.6 Theoretical Framework Integration

The methodology is informed by sociolinguistic and identity theories. The theory of identity and language learning by Norton is applied to explain the way students form identities through choosing a language (Norton 4). In a similar manner, linguistic capital concept by Bourdieu is useful in explaining perceived value of English in academics (Bourdieu 56). The code-switching theory developed by Myers-Scotton can also be used to examine the patterns of language alternation in classroom and social interaction (Myers-Scotton 16).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

There were ethical standards that were observed during the research. Data collection followed informed consent, and the purpose of the study was explained to the participants. The anonymity and confidentiality were ensured through the use of codes rather than names. Cohen argues that respect towards the rights, privacy and dignity of the participants must be upheld in ethical research in education (Cohen 55).

3.8 Methodology Limitations

Despite careful planning, the study has certain limitations. The sample size is also confined to chosen universities which might limit generalizability. Also, there is a possibility of bias in self-reported data in questionnaires, whereby the members of the study may over or underreport the use of language. According to Dörnyei, self-reported data on linguistic behavior is sometimes not a complete measure of the actual behavior (Dörnyei 78).

3.9 Summary of Methodology

This chapter identified research design, sampling, data collection method and analysis procedures employed in the research. To document both the quantitative trends and qualitative significances of multilingual identity and language choice, a mixed-method was used. The methodology gives a solid basis to the analysis of the way university students in Pakistan are moving through various languages both in academic and social settings.

4. Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides the theoretical framework with which the phenomenon of multilingual identity and language choice among Pakistani university students should be explained. The sociolinguistic behavior of multilingual situations cannot be realized without considering the theories of identity, power of language and communication underlying. Norton held that language use can be closely related to the process of identity construction, in which learners engage in a constant process of negotiating meanings and place in social interactions (Norton 11). The choice of language in a multilingual academic setting is not arbitrary, but it represents the social position, cultural belonging and institutional norms. Thus, this research paper is based on various theoretical approaches that demonstrate the ways in which students can make their way between Urdu, English, and local languages.

4.2 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory describes the way in which individuals identify themselves with regard to social groups. According to Tajfel, people receive a sense of identity and self-esteem through memberships of their groups and language is one of the most important indications of belongingness (Tajfel 34). The Pakistani university setting can be characterized by the fact that the students tend to identify with English as an educated and elite language, and with Urdu and local languages as representing cultural and ethnic identity. By switching languages, the students do not only switch linguistic codes, but also indicate belonging to various social groups. As an illustration example, speaking English in academia discussions might indicate compliance with institutional power and academic identity, and switching to Urdu in the informal environment indicates solidarity and emotional connection.

4.3 Linguistic Capital Theory

The idea of linguistic capital by Pierre Bourdieu is the focus of language choice. According to Bourdieu, language is symbolic, and some languages are more valuable in terms of market in social and institutional life (Bourdieu 56). English is regarded as high linguistic capital in Pakistan as it is linked to education, employment and upward mobility. Students invest in English proficiency as it provides them with academic and professional opportunities.

On the other hand, Urdu and regional languages are considered to have lower institutional value, although they are culturally important. This breeds linguistic hierarchy in which students choose language preferences in learning institutions. Crystal also adds that prestige in language is a socially constructed and reinforced phenomenon that is perpetuated by other institutions like educational systems and media (Crystal 2006). This strengthens the superiority of English in schools.

4.4 Code-Switching Theory

The major characteristic of multilingual communication is code-switching. According to Myers-Scotton, code-switching refers to the act of switching two or more languages in one conversation or discourse (Myers-Scotton 16). Pakistani universities often experience the code-switch of English and Urdu by students. English is normally spoken in formal studies like presentations, assignments and exams and Urdu is spoken in clarification and informal communication. According to the Markedness Model by Myers-Scotton, speakers use languages depending on the social norms and communicative intentions (Myers-Scotton 22). An example is the use of the English language in a classroom which can be used to indicate academic ability, whereas the use of Urdu can indicate comfort or unity. Such dynamic nature of language proves that multilingual identity is flexible and context-dependent as opposed to being fixed.

4.5 Identity Negotiation Theory

According to Identity Negotiation Theory, identity is dynamic and is constantly created as a result of interaction. Norton points out that language learner are responsible agents who build identities by being involved in various social situations (Norton 4). In this analysis, the university students in Pakistan constantly bargain over their identities based on language choice. Their academic identity is evident in their use of English whereas the personal and cultural identity is in their use of Urdu and regional languages. The social expectations, peer pressure, and institutional norms influence this negotiation. Students tend to change their language according to the expectations of the social acceptance or academic success.

4.6 Relations between language and power

Power is also closely associated with language. According to Foucault, the power relations are articulated and sustained through the language (Foucault 61). The hegemonic languages are usually symbolic of institutional power in educational settings. English is the language of power and privilege in Pakistan. It prevails in the higher educational system, government and the workplaces. Consequently, academic and career opportunities tend to be more accessible to students with a good command of the English language. This puts an unequal power distance between English and other languages. Despite the cultural significance, Urdu and local languages are usually neglected in the official academic environment.

4.7 Cognitive and Sociolinguistic Integration

Cognitively, mental processing and communicative efficiency affect the choice of language. Sociolinguistic theories, however, focus on the fact that language is also socially constructed. According to Swain, the Output Hypothesis, language learning is possible when learners are actively engaged in producing language, as opposed to passively taking in input (Swain 99). Cognitive flexibility can be promoted by code-switching in multilingual settings, and learners can use a variety of linguistic systems. Nonetheless, over dependence on major languages such as English can reduce the diversity of expression. Crystal is of the opinion that language standardization is usually caused by technological and institutional forces that diminish the difference in language use (Crystal 2006).

4.8 Theoretical Perspectives Synthesis

Collectively, these theories offer a holistic insight into multilingual identity. The Social Identity Theory describes group affiliation, Bourdieu Linguistic Capital the value of language, Code-Switching Theory the flexibility of language and Identity Negotiation Theory how the identity is formed dynamically. Collectively, these frameworks indicate that both social structures and individual agency affect the language choice of university students in Pakistan. Linguistic practices do not involve only passive consumption of language; students actively build meaning and identity through language.

4.9 Overview of Theoretical Analysis

The theoretical background of multilingual identity and language choice was explored in this chapter. It showed that identity negotiation, power relations and social context influence the language use of university students. The analysis reveals that English, Urdu, and regional languages have varying symbolic and functional purposes. Students maneuver through these languages in strategic ways to gain identity, academic success and even social life. The two theoretical viewpoints offer a solid basis to explain the empirical evidence in the following chapter.

5. Discussion / Analysis

This chapter will provide an elaborated interpretation of the results of the study on multilingual identity and language choice in university students in Pakistan. It connects empirical data collected in questionnaires, interviews and classroom interactions with sociolinguistic theories. The discussion dwells on the way the students employ English, Urdu, and the local languages to make identity, bargain social meaning, and react to academic needs. Norton claims that language practices can never be neutral; they are deeply rooted in identity formation and social placement (Norton 11). When in a multilingual academic setting, students are always changing their language behavior based on context, audience and purpose.

5.2 Preeminence of English in Academia

Domination of English in academic settings is one of the most notable discoveries. The students were always found to prefer English when it comes to lectures, assignments, presentations and examinations. This choice is mainly influenced by the fact that it is related to academic performance and career opportunities. According to Rahman, English in Pakistan is seen as a language of upward mobility and institutional power (Rahman 108). This image has a significant impact on the motivation of students to speak English in formal contexts even when they do not speak English as a mother tongue. Nevertheless, a significant number of students also said that they had trouble communicating complex thoughts in English, which prompted them to resort to either code-switching or English-to-Urdu translation. This is an indication of discrepancies between the linguistic competence and academic expectations.

5.3 Urdu in Emotional and Social Expression

Urdu is a key ingredient in emotional and interpersonal communication of the students. It is often applied in casual conversations, peer communication, and in personal expression. Mahboob claims that Urdu is a language of emotional intimacy and social bonding in Pakistan (70). This opinion is supported by the results of this study because students were more comfortable and more fluent to speak in Urdu than in English. Urdu is also a bridge language in multilingual classrooms, as it assists students to explain academic concepts and enable peers to understand.

5.4 Regional Language and Cultural identity

Local languages like Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi and Balochi are still crucial identifiers of cultures. Students claimed to use their mother languages mostly when with their families and when they were with other students of the same language. Fishman stresses that language is a kind of symbol of ethnic identity and solidarity of groups (Fishman 89). This is reflected in the way learners correlate regional languages with cultural genuineness and attachment. The languages are however, not commonly spoken in formal academic environments and this is an indication of their low institutionalization despite their high cultural importance.

5.5 Identity Strategy of Code-Switching

The use of code-switching became a popular linguistic trend among students. Majority of the participants said they used both English and Urdu based on the context. Academic accuracy is provided by English and Urdu is provided as a way of clarifying and informal communication. According to Myers-Scotton, code-switching is a strategic decision, which demonstrates social meaning and identity correspondence (Myers-Scotton 16). In the present research, students resorted to code-switching to cope with academic requirements and still feel communicatively comfortable. As an illustration, in classrooms, the students tend to speak English, but use Urdu when discussing the challenging ideas. This is an illustration of linguistic fluidity and negotiating identity at the moment.

5.6 Prestige and Perception of language

The researchers discovered that the perceived prestige has a strong impact on language choice. The English language is commonly considered the most prestigious language since it is linked to education, jobs and international communication. This fact can be explained by the concept of linguistic capital introduced by Bourdieu who argues that the linguistic languages possess various degrees of symbolic and economic worth (Bourdieu 56). Here, the English language would be considered high linguistic capital and Urdu and regional languages would be deemed as less worth in the academic markets. Such perception determines the behavior of students as they are motivated to give priority to English even when it is difficult. Another perspective that Crystal holds is that institutional support of specific languages make them more dominant in formal spheres (Crystal 2006).

5.8 Identity Negotiation in Multilingualism

5.9 The results indicate clearly that there is no fixed multilingual identity. Students are not monolingual but they build on the basis of constructing fluid identities based on the situation. This process is described by Norton theory of identity negotiation which says that learners constantly construct their own identities in social interaction (Norton 4). In this research, children took on various linguistic identities in various environments- academics, social and familial. As an example, a student might be an English speaking student in school, but a culturally grounded Urdu or regional language speaker at home. This shows the fluid identity construction.

3.10 Social and Academic Implications

This analysis indicates that there are positive and negative connotations of using more than one language. On the upside, multilingualism increases communicative flexibility and cognitive adaptability. Linguistic resources enable students to express meaning by drawing on various resources. But the prevalence of English in the academia is a source of inequality among students with different levels of language proficiency. Learners with less proficiency in English can have an academic disadvantage in their studies even with excellent conceptual knowledge. This helps to substantiate the argument of Rahman that language may serve as an obstacle to the equal educational opportunities in the multilingual society (Rahman 102).

5.9 Synthesis of Findings

On the whole, the results show that the language choice among university students in Pakistan is determined by the complex of identity, prestige, situation, and institutional norms. English is superior in the academic fields, Urdu is used to express emotions, and local languages are used to maintain cultural identity. Code-switching serves as a major approach to dealing with such linguistic requirements. Students actively develop multilingual identities instead of following one linguistic model.

5.10 Summary

This chapter evaluated the effect of multilingual identity on language choice among Pakistani students in universities. The results reveal that language is closely intertwined with the identity negotiation, social structure and power of institutions. The study will be summarized by the next chapter, which will outline the main findings and draw policy and education implications.

6. Conclusion

This paper has explored the multilingual identity and language selection among the university students in Pakistan in relation to the use of English, Urdu and regional languages in both academic and social settings. The results illustrate that the selection of language is not an apolitical linguistic activity but a socially constructed phenomenon that is strongly associated with identity formation, educational achievement, and identity.

The language environment of Pakistani university students is highly complex, with English taking the leading role in formal education, Urdu being the language used in the interpersonal environment, and the regional languages maintaining cultural and emotional identity. According to Norton, the use of language is deeply tied to identity negotiations where learners have to actively engage in the process of constructing and redefining their social identities using the language practices (Norton 11). This was evident in the changing language habits among students in various situations.

6.2 Major Results of the Research

The research showed that there are a number of significant implications of multilingual identity and language choice which encompass:

- English is mostly linked to academic achievements, institutional power and career growth.
- Urdu is commonly used to express emotions, communicate with peers, and informally.
- Local languages are still necessary to cultural identity and family relations.
- Code-switching is an ordinary method of dealing with academic and social communication needs.
- The perceived prestige and institutional demands are very powerful factors in terms of language choice.

Rahman underscores that English in Pakistan is a subtle kind of linguistic capital which defines access to social mobility (Rahman 108). This saw through the use of English among students in learning institutions but with different levels of proficiency.

6.3 Theoretical Implications

These results are quite confirmation of the Social Identity Theory, which proposes that people identify themselves with regard to group membership and social affiliations (Tajfel 34). In order to identify with academic, cultural, and social identities, students spoke various languages. This is also true in the case of linguistic capital since English is more dominant because it is institutionally and economically valued than Urdu and regional languages (Bourdieu 56). The same can be said about the Code-Switching Theory by Myers-Scotton, which is confirmed with the help of the strategy of switching languages adopted by students depending on the context, and the purpose of communication (Myers-Scotton 16).

All these theories, combined, affirm that multilingual identity is not fixed but dynamic, socially constructed and context dependent.

6.4 Pedagogical and Educational Implications

The research has significant implications on the Pakistani educational policy and teaching practice. First, it implies that multilingualism must be perceived as strength and not a weakness. According to Canagarajah, learning can be improved by multilingual resources in case they are implemented to pedagogy (41). Educators must promote the utilization of entire linguistic repertoire to facilitate understanding and expression as opposed to communicating in English only in the classroom. Meanwhile, the systemic assistance to academic English development is also critical to provide equal opportunities to all learners. Inclusive language policies should also be embraced by the learning institutions, with the acknowledgement of Urdu and regional languages as important aspects of the linguistic identity of students. This will assist in minimizing language disparity and enhance student interest

6.5 Social Implications

Other social implications of multilingual identity are also brought out in this study. The choice of language is also a sign of social stratification, with English being connected to elite status and social mobility and other languages being continuously marginalized in official areas. Crystal observes that dominant languages are reinforced in an institutional way, which leads to the linguistic hierarchy and linguistic variety diminishing (Crystal 2006). This was revealed in the fact that students perceived English to be more valuable than their mother languages. These attitudes can cause the occurrence of linguistic inequality in the long term unless balanced language policies are taken.

6.6 Study Limitations

In spite of its contributions, the study has some limitations. The research sample only included selected universities and this might limit the extrapolation of research results to all institutions of higher learning in Pakistan. Also, self-reported data might not adequately reflect real language behavior under some circumstances. According to Dörnyei, self-reports on language usage are sometimes based on perceptions and not necessarily actual usage patterns (Dörnyei 78). Future studies ought to use longitudinal and larger studies to have a more in-depth understanding.

6.7 Future Research Recommendations

Future research needs to investigate:

- The multilingual identity development of university students over a long period.
- The effect of digital communication on code switching.
- The role of regional languages in the formal education system.
- Comparative research on urban and rural university environment.

This type of research will further enhance knowledge about the ways in which multilingualism is still developing in the academic setting.

6.8 Final Conclusion

To sum up, multilingual identity of university students in Pakistan is dynamic and fluid, and context-sensitive. The use of language is influenced by academic requirements, cultural affiliation, social relationship and institutional pressures. The research supports the development of knowledge that English, Urdu, and regional languages are unique yet related aspects of the life of students. English is the language of scholarly and occupational prospects, Urdu is the language of emotional and social interaction, and the local languages help to maintain cultural identity. Instead of considering multilingualism as a problem, it must be perceived as an important cognitive and cultural asset. As Norton points out, the end result of language learning is identity formation and social engagement (Norton 11).

Thus, language policies that are inclusive and balanced to promote not only academic English proficiency but also multilingual identity formation must be taken into account by educational systems. Such a moderate solution will make sure that students not only become linguistically fluent but also culturally-based and socially-empowered.

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