

(De) Constructing The Linguistic Identity Of Undergraduate Level English As Second Language Learners: Revisiting The Language Identities Urdu And English

Liaquat Ali Mohsin¹, Muhammad Imran Afzal², Faraz Ahmed³, Farah Deeba⁴, Dr. Mahmood Ahmad Azhar⁵

¹Assistant Professor of English, Govt. Graduate College Shakargarh, Narowal, Pakistan.

²Senior Subject Specialist English, Govt. Higher Secondary School, Kacha Khuh, Mian Chanoon, Pakistan.

³Corresponding Author: M. Phil English Linguistics, Institute of English Literature - IELL, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan. farazahmedumrani@gmail.com

⁴Assistant Professor of English (PhD Scholar) Government Graduate College of Home Economics Multan,

⁵Professor /Chairperson, Department of English, Lahore Leads University, Lahore, Pakistan.

Abstract

This study investigates the realm of linguistic identity among undergraduate English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, focusing on the dynamic interplay between Urdu and English. Employing both quantitative methods and an interpretative approach rooted in the post-positivist paradigm, it aims to unravel the construction and deconstruction of linguistic identities within the framework of the national curriculum. The research centers around undergraduate students at Habib University, reflecting a diverse cross-section of ESL learners grappling with the complexities of Urdu and English dictated by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) guidelines. Using quota sampling, 400 students were

recruited, ensuring representation across various academic disciplines. The study gathered data through a 21-item Linguistic Identity instrument, revealing nuanced identities. ESL learners displayed a preference for English in academic contexts while maintaining a strong affiliation with Urdu in terms of social identity and cultural significance. The research underscores the significance of acknowledging and preserving linguistic identities, championing linguistic diversity, and deepening our comprehension of the relationship between language, culture, and social identity in education.

Introduction

The landscape of linguistic identity is a realm of profound significance in the contemporary globalized world. The interplay of languages and their far-reaching sociocultural implications exert a profound influence on individuals, shaping their self-perceptions, guiding their social interactions, and dictating their access to a myriad of opportunities. In the expansive realm of language identity, the experiences of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, particularly those at the undergraduate level, represent a dynamic and continuously evolving domain that beckons scholarly exploration. It encapsulates not only the languages one speaks but also the meanings, emotions, and affiliations tied to those linguistic choices. For undergraduate ESL learners, the process of developing and negotiating their linguistic identities is a complex one, shaped by a myriad of internal and external factors. These factors include their personal linguistic backgrounds, the sociocultural contexts in which they are situated, and the evolving dynamics of global communication and education.

In recent years, the intersection of linguistic identities in ESL contexts has gained prominence in scholarly discourse. The negotiation between one's native language (L1) and the target language (L2), as well as the fluidity of linguistic boundaries, has brought to the forefront the need for a nuanced understanding of how

linguistic identities are (de)constructed. This study responds to this call by delving into the experiences of undergraduate ESL learners, focusing on the interplay between Urdu and English as central facets of their linguistic identities. The choice of Urdu and English as focal points for this study is particularly significant. Urdu, a language rich in history and cultural significance, serves as the participants' native language, deeply intertwined with their personal and communal identities. In contrast, English, often positioned as a global lingua franca and the medium of instruction in many educational contexts, represents a bridge to broader opportunities and a gateway to international discourse. The juxtaposition of these two languages in the lives of ESL learners presents a compelling narrative of linguistic (de)construction, highlighting the complexities and subtleties of their linguistic identities.

As we navigate this exploration, it is imperative to recognize the diverse and dynamic nature of linguistic identity. The experiences of ESL learners are not monolithic but are rather influenced by a myriad of factors, including individual agency, educational contexts, and societal perceptions. By engaging in an in-depth examination of the experiences, perceptions, and self-identifications of undergraduate ESL learners, we aim to contribute to the expanding body of literature on linguistic identity and, more specifically, shed light on the unique complexities associated with the negotiation of Urdu and English as integral components of their linguistic selves. In the subsequent sections of this study, we embark on a comprehensive journey. We will delve into the theoretical underpinnings of linguistic identity, examining key concepts and frameworks that inform our analysis. We will then proceed to present the research methodology, delineating the strategies employed to gather and analyze data from undergraduate ESL learners. Subsequently, we will explore the findings of our research, offering insights into the (de)construction of linguistic identities within the Urdu-English linguistic landscape. Finally, we will engage in a reflective discussion, situating our findings

within the broader context of ESL education and linguistic identity scholarship while also considering the practical implications for educators, policymakers, and practitioners in the field. Through this scholarly inquiry, we aspire to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamic and multifaceted world of linguistic identity among undergraduate ESL learners navigating the Urdu-English linguistic terrain.

Research Questions:

1. How do undergraduate English as a Second Language (ESL) learners (de)construct their linguistic identities in the context of the Urdu and English languages within the national curriculum?
2. What are the sociocultural and educational factors influencing the negotiation and (de)construction of linguistic identities among undergraduate ESL learners, specifically in relation to Urdu and English as institutionalized languages?

Research Objectives:

1. To investigate the multifaceted (de)construction of linguistic identities among undergraduate ESL learners, with a particular emphasis on the dynamic interaction between Urdu and English, through a mixed-methods research approach.
2. To analyze the sociocultural, educational, and personal factors shaping the linguistic identities of undergraduate ESL learners, aiming to provide insights into the processes and influences contributing to the formation and transformation of these identities within the national curriculum context.

Literature Review

Language and its rehearsal

Language has typically been defined as a set of integrated, as well as syntactic, semantic, and grammatical features, with

structuralists analysing it from their perspective. Language is seen as a succession of heightened impulses. a medium of communication that is neutral,' yet poststructuralists see language as a war for implications (Norton, 2010, p.350).

She goes on to suggest that, contrary to popular belief, linguistic groupings are a complicated and contradictory site of power and truth. Language, according to post-structuralists, is defined as an array of meaning-laden discourses, a site of identity creation in which all languages and discourses are not equal in the linguistic marketplace, rather than from a syntactic and psycholinguistic standpoint (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 283). Pierre Bourdieu, a French anthropologist and social theorist, used economic parallels to characterise linguistic capital and market, which he defined as a "structured space of positions in which the positions and their interrelationships are regulated by the distribution of various kinds of sources" (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991, p.14).

Post-structuralists drew language practises from Bourdieu's perspective, in which a particular linguistic variety is valued for its ability to obtain a high-quality education, a desirable position on the social mobility ladder, or a job (Pavlenko, 2002). As a result, not all languages or discourses have the same value, making it impossible for an individual or society to gain economic and social capital through language practise.

Language and Identity

Because discursive rhetoric expresses users' allegiance and emotional commitment, language use is an act of identification (Rasookha, 2010, p. 24). Identity and language are intricately related concepts that serve the purpose of individual and communal recognition. Our linguistic identity evolves as a result of our use of language to reveal our identities (Rezaei, Khatib, & Baleghizadeh, 2014). As a result, Block (2009) defines linguistic identity as "a link between

one's sense of self and diverse ways of communication, understood in terms of language, dialect, or sociolect" (p. 43). Khatib and Rezaei (2013) identified six components of linguistic identity (Table 1) that characterise how language is interpreted by its user in relation to the context in which it is used.

In this manner, within multilingual cultures, these identities may either appeal to or repel individuals from certain languages, variations, and linguistic forms forced on them and rationally maintained via negotiation (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p.3).

Chart No. 1: Components of identity of language

Component	Definition
Mother tongue's tenderness	Native language ideas and emotions in contrast with foreign language
Manner of Pronunciation	In compared to L2, how people perceive and feel about L1. Perceived ideal pronunciation and attitudes toward L1 and L2 pronunciation patterns
Language and social status	Associating a person's social rank with the language they speak
Native language use or exposure in the society	People's use of L1 vs. L2 in their daily lives
Language knowledge	Knowledge of one's own language's history and literature
Script or alphabet	Feelings for one's own language's alphabet and writing system

Source: (Khatib&Rezaei, 2013, p. 695)

As a result, people use languages to express themselves, and each time they do, their identities are

altered (Hall, 2011). Researchers revealed a significant relationship between identity and language acquisition (Pierce, 1995, Block, 2007, Rasookha, 2010), yet this relationship went unnoticed in many language classrooms. The more languages you speak, the more identities you have, according to Phan (2008). As a result, someone who understands many languages may have multiple identities without being unconscious of their discursive practises and cultural and linguistic resources.

Rasookha (2010) referred to this stage as the "implicit language identification phase," and she grouped trainees' language identities into three categories, as shown in Table No. Two. Language identity exists only in its "embryonic" form at the time, and it must be enacted and understood through discursive activities. Stage 2 exposes learners to the views of other participants who share a linguistic identity, allowing them to analyse themselves via critical investigation of other people's story histories. Finally, learners become aware of the linguistic underpinnings of their L1 and L2 languages, forming and controlling their linguistic identity (p. 24- 30).

Table 2: Developmental stage of learners' language identity

Stages	Explanation
1. Un-examined language identity	Learners are incognizant of their own communicative behavior, cultural and linguistic underpinnings of L1 & L2
2. Language identity search	Accommodating learners for self-identification by exposing discourses and experience of selected members from similar language identity to create a keen awareness associating themselves to larger linguistic community instead L1 ESL community
3. Language identity achievement	Learners acquired skills to confidently display and monitor their language use adopting analytical approach of own self-recognition and salient attributes of language and its speaker

Educational settings play a crucial role in this regard since they "have a monopoly in large-scale formation of producers and consumers" and are thus responsible for developing a shop for the societal value of linguistic capital (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991, p.57). However, the language use in a specific educational context should be approached with caution since it raises concerns of identity in the learning process. Furthermore, emphasizing the post-structuralist paradigm means not just examining the learning environment but also instilling learners' voices as active actors in the learning process, which had previously been disregarded (Pavlenko, 2002).

As a result, language policy, defined as "a planned and legislated act of a government for regulating language for distributing information and skills and for usage in public situations" (Owu-Ewie&Eshun, 2015), should be created to ensure discretion while bolstering the user's linguistic identity.

Linguistic Identity Tool

The study used a validated questionnaire with 21 items (Table 3) tailored from Khatib and Razaei's (2013) questionnaire of linguistic identity, but with Urdu as a replacement for Persian, to assess students' 'learning' language persona using a six-point Likert scale scored from 1 to 6, with intensely Agree earning 1 point and Firmly Disapprove receiving 6 points. Because this assures the questionnaire's reliability, validity, and usefulness, it was piloted with a similar sample of students (cited by Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p.341). The Cronbach alpha score for gauging questionnaire inter-item reliability is 0.9, which is regarded extremely trustworthy (see, Cohen. et. al, 2007, p.506)

Methodology

The study employs a quantitative technique as well as an interpretative approach to better comprehend ESL learners' linguistic identities for institutionalised languages defined by the national curriculum, namely Urdu and English. It is centered on the post-positivist paradigm, which, according to one of linguist raises concerns by offering new interpretation alternatives for several significant research components. As a result, the post-positivist paradigm allows academics to comprehend ESL learners' linguistic identities. Furthermore, according to Creswell (2013), a post-positivistic construction enables tools to examine, validate, and improve laws or concepts by accumulating information that either supports or refutes the theory. It demonstrates that employing quantitative methodologies to create comprehension of unquantifiable things is achievable in a post-positivist worldview. The outcomes are created and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics edition 22.0, and are presented as answer rates and explanatory statistics.

Undergraduate students at a prominent public Habib University pursuing four and five-year study programmes in a

variety of subjects provide the research's genuine population, from which the conclusions can be extrapolated. These undergraduates are English as a Second Language students who must complete required English lessons as outlined in the national curriculum by HEC. Quota sampling, which tries to provide proportional weighting to selected strata based on proportions found in the wider population, was used to enrol 400 students from this cohort in the study (Cohen, et. al., 2007: 114).

This sampling quota included 6% of the total undergraduate student population and 20% of pupils enrolled in or recently finished English lessons. The number of seats given for each discipline determines the percentage for each degree programme.

These percentages are used to choose study participants from each field. Table 4 provides a concise summary of the study population, research site, and sample. Gender and academic specialties are utilised to proportionally divide the population.

The contributors were contacted through their professors after receiving functional and individual informed permission. The lead investigator handed out questionnaires and explained how to fill them out to students who offered to play a part in the study. Students have the option of filling out the form immediately away or returning it the tomorrow. However, only 316 of the 400 forms were completed, yielding a response rate of 79 percent. The remaining surveys were either unfinished or unreturned.

Table 4: Population and Sample & Description of Research Site,

A total of 8020 students are enrolled in 30 varieties of undergraduate degree programmes in various fields at a Habib University. The university's male to female ratio is 60:40 among the 2005 students who enrolled in a mandatory English language foundation course.

A total of four hundred undergraduates were enrolled in the study, with male students accounting for 260 (65% of the sample) and female students accounting for 150. (45% of sampling)

Sampling [N]**400 Undergraduates [220 Boys; 180 Girls]****Analysis and Findings of Data:**

The data composed with the Linguistic Identity instrument, which contained 21 items on a 6-point Likert scale, was coded and analysed to characterise the identity of language novices in English and Urdu, which are their indigenous language and target language, respectively. The results from the several constructions of the linguistic identity questionnaire, as well as its conclusions, are presented here.

Questions	Answers					
	Intensely Agree	Agree	marginally Agree	Intensely Disagree	Disagree	Marginally disagree
I would like that all of my undergraduate classes be taught in English rather than Urdu.	30%	20%	20%	9%	11%	10%
I prefer to attend Urdu lessons greater than English classes.	8%	16%	23%	6%	25%	22%
Urdu is my preferred language above English.	21%	25%	20%	5%	12%	17%

Chart No.5 reflects the products Language identity research collects information regarding students' affection to the Urdu, social standing, linguistic and pronunciation boldness, Native language exposure in society, language knowledge, attitudes about the alphabet , and attitude toward English. The findings on pupils' affection to Urdu language indicated that they greatly prefer English language to be utilised for coaching them passages in their academic locations, with 30% strongly agreeing and 20% agreeing and slightly agreeing. In response to the question of whether they

prefer to attend Urdu courses over English classes, 25% of students disagree and 21% have a mild dissimilarity with the assertion. However, students partake showed an aggregate of 66%, indicating that they prefer Urdu to English.

Chart VI: Societal Prestige of Languages

Questions	Answers					
	Intensely Agree	Agree	Intensely Disagree	Marginally Disagree	Disagree	Marginally disagree
I feel that someone who is fluent in English has a higher social position and is more respected in society.	20.1%	26.5%	4.6%	13%	10%	13%
In Pakistani society, I feel that learning English earns you more respect than understanding Urdu.	22.6%	32.4%	4.5%	8.1%	10.5%	8.1%

In answer to questions on language and social standing, students stayed questioned to indicate on their thoughts regarding the language of English. 25.9% of students believe that someone who speaks English well has a superior societal respect and prestige, whereas 25.8% disagree and 20.1 percent strongly agree. Furthermore, as shown in Table 6, 32.4 percent of learners feel that studying English earns them more respect in Pakistani society than comprehending Urdu, with slightly agrees and strongly agrees at 21.9 percent and 22.6 percent, respectively.

Chart VII: Societal Exposure and Usage of Urdu Language

Questions	Answers					
	Intensely Agree	Agree	Marginally Agree	intensely Disagree	Disagree	Marginally disagree

In my daily existence, I regularly utilise English.	8.1%	12.2	32	5.2%	20.5%	20.5%
When I speak Urdu, I usually use English phrases.	16.2%	31.6%	28.8%	3.4%	7.6%	12.4%

With my English-speaking acquaintances, I prefer to talk English rather than Urdu.	16.2%	26.1%	25%	15%	15%	2.7%
I like to read English literature over Urdu ones	26.3%	30%	20.5%	12.3%	8%	2.9%

Chart No.VII depicts how the Urdu language is utilised and perceived in society. Only 8.1 percent of learners strongly feel they speak English in daily routine, while 32% Mildly agree and 12.2% agree. When asked if they agree or disagree with the idea that they should utilise more English language when speaking Urdu, 31.6 percent agree and 28.8 percent disagree slightly. When asked if they would rather speak English with their English-speaking friends than Urdu, 26.1 percent replied yes, followed by 25 percent who said slightly yes and 16.2 percent who said absolutely yes. Learners preferred reading English content to Urdu, with 30% agreeing and 26.3 percent strongly agreeing.

Chart VIII: Urdu Language Appreciation

Questions	Answers					
	Intensely Agree	Agree	Mildly Agree	Intensely Disagree	Disagree	Mildly Disagree

I choose learning Urdu literature and history as compared to English literature and history	19.3%	21%	20%	6.9%	11.8%	21%
I'm more interested in Urdu poets and authors than English ones.	18.4%	18.8%	23%	9.3%	14.1%	16.4%
I read a lot of Urdu poetry and tales.	21%	16%	20.5%	13.2%	16.1%	13.2%

Table 8 shows how information on learners' knowledge of their first language, Urdu, was gathered in order to determine their linguistic identity. Learners were more likely to know about the literature and history of the Urdu than the English, with a accumulative proportion of 60.3 in agreement. Pupils were more interested in learning about Urdu poets and authors than in learning about English poets and writers. On the other hand, just 21% of students indicate a strong desire to study Urdu poetry and stories and agree to do so.

Chart 9: Emotions towards language writing system

Questions	Answers					
	Intensely Agree	Agree	Mildly Agree	Intensely Disagree	Disagree	Mildly disagree
I used English language in e-mails and text messages.	28.7%	30%	22%	2.5%	4%	12.8%
Urdu alphabets are more appealing to me than English alphabets.	9%	14%	20%	10%	17%	13%
I desire Urdu was written in the (Roman) Latin alphabet.	12.3%	13.2%	19.1%	20.1%	19.5%	15.8%

Learner responses to what they believe about language writing system are shown in chart 9. With 28.7% strongly agreeing and 22% slightly agreeing, 30% of respondents agree to send text messages and emails in English, suggesting a significant preference for using the English writing system. Students disagreed with the statement "I prefer Urdu alphabets over English alphabets," and just 9% said they strongly preferred Urdu. Learners had mixed opinions about writing Urdu in (Roman) Latin alphabets, with 44.6 percent agreeing and 55.4 percent disagreeing.

Chart No. 10: English language learners' attitude

Questions	Answers					
	Intensely Agree	Agree	Mildly Agree	Intensely Disagree	Disagree	Mildly Disagree

As a compulsory language, it is vital to study English.	41%	31.3%	16.5%	1.4%	6.1%	3.7%
Learning English has a detrimental impact on the Urdu language.	12.2%	15.9%	20%	16.9%	21%	14%

Chart No. 10 depicts the learners' perspectives on acquiring English as a target language. A considerable proclivity is acquired, with 41 percent of learners strongly believing that learning English as a required language is vital, followed by 31.3 percent who agree. Furthermore, they have a range of perspectives on how studying English may harm the Urdu language, revealing their shortage of understanding of linguistic identity.

Table 11: standard deviation and Mean for Identity of language

Paradigm	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Language identity	315	65.8277	11.811854

The amount of linguistic uniqueness (native language and target language) of learners is determined by calculating the data acquired by an instrument designed to measure these components. The results are acquired using descriptive statistical analysis in SPSS. Respondents' ratings for language identification range from 23 to 126 positions for the 22 items displayed for assessing linguistic identity, which are graded from 1 to 6 points on a likert scale. Statistical methods were used to determine the cut off points for classifying scores into low point, mild, and high' levels. The mean and standard deviation of scores were computed in order to define cut off values. As a result, scores over one standard deviation and below the mean are regarded as high and low, respectively.

Furthermore, in the moderate group, scores in the centre of the required range were taken. The computed mean

and standard deviation for linguistic identity based on scores from the surveyed instrument are 65.81 and 11.76, respectively, as shown in Table 11. As a consequence, scores ranging from 58.16 to 78.70 were classified as "moderate," whereas values ranging from 58.16 to 78.70 indicated "strong" and "poor" linguistic identification, respectively. Furthermore, lower questionnaire scores suggest a stronger devotion to one's L1 language (i.e. Urdu language). The data revealed that 70% of students at a public engineering university showed a "moderate level" of linguistic identity. Only 17% of learners had a strong link to their L1, while 16% had a weak relationship.

Discussion

Both gendered pupils take part in the report. In spite of their connection with Urdu, students are unwilling to participate in respective language; instead, they are fond of their native language and would like to learn regarding its past. Similarly, pupils think about English in order to get a specific social position. According to data, the majority of learners choose their L1 above English, suggesting a desire to study all courses in English and a minor interest in attending Urdu sessions. Furthermore, participants in the poll agreed that English had a better social status than Urdu.

They preferred to communicate in English rather than Urdu in everyday situations, expressed no desire to learn Urdu, and intensely endorsed English as an essential language. They also indicated mixed sentiments about the negative impacts of English language training on the language of Urdu. Furthermore, their preference for adopting the native language script and writing system entirely for digital interaction is disturbing, given that they choose English and write Urdu using the Roman/Latin alphabet. Furthermore, a low level of linguistic identification suggests an unstudied identity phase during which learners are unable to devote significant time to either L1 or L2.

The discussed situation highlights ESL novices' speculation in language for what Pierce (1995) denotes to as a "good return on investment," emphasising that learners assess the value of a official language and finance in the anticipations of "acquiring a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will increase the value of their cultural capital" (p.17). The findings are in line with Anbreen's (2015) research, which revealed that learners' identities are hybrid and adaptable when learning English as a second language in a Pakistani institution, and that they need to be investigated. As a result, from its origin, the bilingual educational system has played an important role in the formation of learners' linguistic identities (Mahboob& Jain, 2016).

Developing L1 writing and script inclination, Ahmed (2009) emphasised that, in spite of the availability of Urdu advocate for digital communication, roman writing is extensively utilised for drafting Urdu manuscript, particularly for casual communiqué, despite the fact that it is an unapproved standard. Because learners are ignorant of their communication actions, the findings suggest that preventative measures be taken. The unexamined state of linguistic identity needs developing a clear grasp of the application for both mother tongue and foreign language pupil ought to study and participate in their second language, but not at the expense of their native language.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Linguistic Identities have been a highly examined hot topic across the world, with a variety of questionnaires, procedures, study designs, methods, and philosophical opinions developed for the interpretation of that data. Despite English's prominence and privileged status, this study indicated that learners' language identification for Urdu (L1) and English (L2) languages skewed toward national language and social vitality. Students' lack of comprehension of languages' multiple roles is highlighted by the findings, a fact

that needs the acknowledgment, establishment, and protection of linguistic identity at the grassroots level.

Stakeholders must address the importance of ESL learners' linguistic identities being recognised, developed, and preserved, which has ramifications in educational, social, and family contexts, among other places. Teachers and students must be aware of and use to their advantage the construction of linguistic identity in bilingual situations and among ESL presenters, as well as its perception, theoretical, and indicators. In addition, the neighboring ecosystem and cultural setting must be compatible with the repercussions of numerous and competing linguistic identities. Language instructors should not treat language pupils linguistic identities as distinct entities; instead, they should support the recognition, formation, and maintenance of language identities, as well as urge learners to attain self-actualization in order to become proficient language users.

Language teachers should raise public awareness of language's societal role and, in particular, clarify concepts such as historic buildings, primary language, native, national, or the juxtaposition of mother tongue, lingua franca language, national language, official, foreign, and conceptions, as well as the ramifications of these concepts, so that trainees can come to terms with their polyglot identities. This action will help foster societal concord, which is necessary for social cohesiveness among various ethnolinguistic societies to oblige as a substance for the homeland's progress and innovation.

To optimise the learning experience, curriculum and syllabus must be designed with the related relationship of language and culture in mind. Rather than relying on systems and tactics from monolingual and English as a second or foreign language contexts, classroom teachers and linguistic teacher learning and training initiatives should study other alternatives and practises that are more appropriate for multilingual and ESL situations. Because the world is

constantly changing and becoming increasingly digitised, digital tools and corpus planning for the Urdu language are essential to aid teachers and learners while also safeguarding the sovereignty of the national language.

The investigations are conducted at a government agency in a city where the majority of students speak Urdu as their first language.. Taking additional languages (s) into consideration enables for a comparable analysis to be conducted. The study also employs a poststructuralist paradigm and a quantitative technique, which may be supplemented with a qualitative method that delves deeper into linguistic identity.

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