



Influence of English as a Second Language on Personality of Private University's students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as Second Language Learners

Abdullah Barki

Keywords:

ESL learning, personality, five trait model, importance of English, Three circles of English, Psychological influence of language learning

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to find out the influence of English as a Second language (ESL) on the personality of male Pashtun students studying at City University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar (CUSIT) which is a private university of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using purposive sampling technique from thirty male students of Department of English of City University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar. The participants were the native speakers of Pashto; therefore, the present study aims to investigate the influence of ESL on male Pashtun students. The study shows male students experience change in their personality while learning English as a second language. It also highlights ESL learning as an essential element of motivation for Pashtun male students. Students were found more expressive and extrovert. The present study recommends educational policy makers to design policies which can improve students' personality in a positive way.

INTRODUCTION

The interdependence between personality and second language or foreign language learning has become a certain focus of study for the recent years (Ehrman and Oxford, 1995; Verhoeven and Vermeer, 2002; cited in Zhang, Su and Liu, 2013). Language is a tool used by people to express their ideas during conversation which also shows their identity of who they are and what is their response towards relationship with the outside world (Norton, 2000). Personality psychologists have recently investigated the use of natural language in its relation with the psychological development of an individual. One aspect in this regard is the relationship between the distinctive characteristics of an individual and the choice of words that people use during mutual

communication (Hirsh and Peterson, 2009). Different researches have been conducted on the relationship between personality and second language learning; for example, Chen and Bond (2010) have conducted research on Chinese-English bilinguals to find the relationship between personality and language. However, there is almost lack of research regarding the influence of English language in Pakistan (Mahboob, 2003). Hence, the present research is an attempt to fill somewhat this vacuum as the study has been conducted in the local context.

The use of English as a second language:

English has been considered as the most widespread second language (Rahman, 1999). English as a second language has been used as a valuable tool to survive in the global community on social, economic and political grounds (Paik, 2008). In the modern era, the world has become a global village as a result of developments in science and technology. In this global village, people communicate with each other mainly through English. The global dominancy of English is the evidence of the fact that it is the most spoken language in the world as more than 380 million people are speaking it as their mother language while more than 200 million people are speaking and learning it as their second language (Alfarhan, 2016).

Importance of English language in Pakistan:

The spreading of English language has been described by Kachru in 1985 while using the three-circle model. The three-circle model includes the inner circle, the outer circle, and the expanding circle. The Inner Circle includes the Native English-speaking countries such as England, America and Canada. The Outer Circle consists of the former colonies such as India, Africa and Nigeria and finally the Expanding Circle includes countries such as China, Japan and Turkey, which have increasingly been affected by Western economic and cultural models and where English is becoming an important language in business, science, technology and education. Hence, as former colonies of the British Empire, also India and Pakistan come in the Inner Circle (Anbreen, 2015).

Pakistan is among those countries where English has got a very prominent position in the education sector. The importance of the English language can be studied and understood from the historical perspective. There was no concept regarding the learning and use of English language before the British rule. When the British came to the sub-continent in the 16th century they gradually took over and announced English as the official language. English did not lose its status and remained the official language of Pakistan and India even after their independence from the British in 1947. Because of its social and political status, both the newly independent states accepted it as their official language (Mahboob, 2003).

The Status of English in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:

In 2013, the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa run by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) decided to bring reforms in the education system and changed the medium of instruction from Urdu to English at primary level with the aim to improve education in Government schools and bring both private and public schools at par by April 2014 (Dawn News, September 28, 2014). This step was taken by the government as it realized the importance of English language in education.

According to Rasheed, Zeeshan and Zaidi (2017), the importance of English language is very high in Pakistan as those students who are skilled in speaking English are given more priority in jobs and admissions as compared to those who are less proficient in English language (Cited in Saddiq, 2018). Therefore, it is indeed very important to do research over the influence of English as a second language in Pakistan. The main focus in this study would be on the effects of ESL learning on the ESL Learners at university level. In such way, this study would be a doorway for future investigations as well.

LITERATURE REVIEW

People communicate with each other through language, which not only influences the world-view of the speaker but also the innate personality of its users (Wederus, 2017). As it is the language that constructs the culture therefore, it causes changes in the personality of the speakers which is evident from the definition of personality. Personality refers to the set of behaviours, cognitions, and emotions that are developing and changing because of biological and environmental or cultural factors (Corr and Matthews, 2009). Here it means that environment refers to the cultural factors and traditions which has impact on every individual living in that culture. Hence, from this definition we came to the point that it changes and develops because of environmental factors such as language. The personality psychologists have recently investigated the use of natural language in its relation with the psychological development of an individual. One aspect in this regard is the relationship between the distinctive characteristics of an individual and the choice of words that people use during mutual communication (Hirsh and Peterson, 2009). Thus, the acquisition of a second language is an essential element which affects the personality of its users and speakers. It only occurs when a speaker of any language learns a second language such as English. A Czech proverb would be well-matched to this context i.e. “Learn a new language and get a new soul”.

Grosjean (2011) proposed that personality is not rigid, rather it changes in bilingual situations, where a person is exposed to more than one language. He conducted the study on different participants who were bilingual to prove his point of view. The study showed that participants replied differently as they were from different bilingual regions,

Bilingual 1:

The first participant replied that he was feeling awkward and was unable to choose his words properly while present among *Anglo- Americans*. On the other hand, the participant was confident, sharper, open and friendly while present among *Latinos/Spanish-speakers*.

Bilingual 2:

The second participant replied that he acts very polite with a relaxed tone while speaking English and uses a lot of words like *Please* and *Excuse*. The participant replied that he used to talk more rapidly with anxious tone and in a rude way while speaking Greek.

Bilingual 3:

The third participant replied that he was much gentler and softer while speaking Russian. On the

other hand, he was harsher while speaking English.

The above study shows that a participant from a different social background had different approach towards English. Therefore, some participants were polite and others were harsh while speaking English. Although the participants had different reactions due to sociocultural factors, the experiment proves that personality is always affected when switching from first to second language.

The acquisition of new knowledge by a human being occurs as a result of his or her relationship with a specific group of people and the increasing likeness between him or her and the community (Toohey, Day and Manyak, 2007). Brown (2007) emphasized that the socio-cultural theory by Vygotsky also concentrates on the increasing role of interaction in society through the use of language for the cognitive development of the speaker (Anbreen, 2015). It shows that using language for social interaction results in cognitive development of the speakers/learners and affects their personality.

The present study was designed in a local context and was aimed to investigate the psychological effect of English as second language learning on the personality of male Pashtun students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To investigate the relation between personality and ESL learning, qualitative method was adopted. Qualitative research is a form of analysis that analyses or evaluates the information conveyed through language and behaviour in natural settings (Berkwits and Inui, 1998). The aim of the study was to find the influence of ESL learning on personality of ESL learners. The data was collected by using Purposive Sampling technique. Semi-structured interviews were conducted from the students by using purposive sampling technique as qualitative method. The purposive sampling technique is used when the researcher aims to conduct data from the participants who can fulfil the need of the desired study (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim, 2016). Thus, the data was collected from the students of BS-English as they are doing their major in the respective course.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In qualitative data analysis, the main aim of the study is to know about the personal relationship of the participant with the outside world. As the students of BS-English are more concerned with learning English therefore, all the participants were taken from BS-English department. The participants were interviewed regarding their former personality in school and college and the change in their personality while learning English as their major subject in University.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted from thirty (30) male students of City University of Science and Information Technology (CUSIT) Peshawar. The interviews were conducted from the students of BS-English department as their main aim of study is also to learn English as second language.

All the interview questions were divided in five categories for analysis. The five categories of

analysis were (1) The response of the students towards change in behaviour after choosing Bs-English for learning English.(2)The students’ response towards behaving like English people after learning English as second language.(3)The response of students towards changes in confidence level after learning English as a second language.(4)The student’s response towards using words of apology in their communication in English, Urdu, and Pashto.(5)The response of the students towards learning English as a tool of motivation promote their native culture like English people. The responses of all the students to the above categories have been separately discussed below.

(1) The students’ response to the change in behaviour with ESL learning:

Out of 30 participants 26 (86.66%) participants were of the view that their behaviour changes greatly after ESL learning in university. The participants who replied positively were of the view that listening is one of the most important tool of learning English. It shows that change in behaviour is the result of watching Hollywood movies and listening to the English news channels like Aljazeera, BBC and CNN etc. They were of the view that listening to the native speakers has changed their behaviour. The following extract from the interviews reflects change in behaviour because of ESL learning.

Extract No.1:

I was speaking Urdu and Pashto more at my school and college level where my behaviour was so much changed from the present one. English language learning has changed my behaviour because to learn and speak English language I listen to the native speakers of English mostly by watching movies and try to be politer like them mostly to the children.

At school and college, the students usually watch Pakistani dramas and Bollywood movies which are very much changed from the Hollywood movies. Mostly those people who speak and understand English, watch English movies. Therefore, it is the main reason that when students come to university their behaviour changes also after learning English through taking lectures and communication in English.

(2) The students’ response towards behaving like English people while learning English as second language.

This issue can be called as a part of the above question. The results show that the students get inspired by their idea of English people while learning English language. These students are becoming more extrovert and they are adopting the lifestyle of English people. The students become motivated to be like English people and be connected to the outside world. Out of 30 students 24(80%) students were of the view that they have discovered themselves as half Englishmen after learning English language at university level. The following extract from the interviews show that the students started behaving like English people after learning English language.

Extract No.2:

I am learning English as a second language as my mother language is Pashto. People often give

respect to students who are more advanced in English language. It is the reason that with learning English language my ego is increasing. I listen to the native speakers of English language by watching movies to speak like them. Therefore, now I behave like English people and I see many changes in myself with learning English language.

(3) The students' response towards change in confidence level while learning English language

This question (does your confidence level change while learning English as second language) was aimed to know about the change in confidence level of the students while learning English as second language as compared to the past. Out of 30 students 27 students were of the view that they feel changes in their confidence level while learning English as second language. The main reason behind it is that the English language is the language of most developed countries in the world. Therefore, the students who are learning English identify themselves as in connection with the English people. In this way their ego become high and their confidence level is increased.

Extract No.3:

I feel myself more confident when I am speaking English as compared to Urdu and Pashto. While learning English I become more confident to communicate with my teachers. Now I am able to address the people in many events where the language is mostly English.

The above extract from the interviews clearly shows the change in confidence level with learning English as a second language. As language and culture are inter-linked with each other therefore, because of the cultural factors' ESL learning changes the level of confidence in students.

(4) The students' response towards using words of apology in their conversation in English, Urdu, and Pashto:

The interview question (Do you use politeness formulae in your communication in Pashto and Urdu?) was formed to know about the change in politeness level with learning English language. The study revealed that out of 30 students 27 students (90%) were of the view that they use words of apology in their conversation both in English and Urdu. However, it shows that the level of politeness increases with learning English as second language. The following extract from the interviews clearly shows the change in politeness level with learning English as second language.

Extract No.4:

I usually watch English movies to improve my English speaking. As the characters in English movies and dramas use excusive words in usual conversation that is why I also use these words. I see myself as politer after learning English.

From the above responses of participants, it is concluded that the cultural association with English as a second language become a major element in affecting the personality of the students.

LIMITATIONS

- (1) The research was conducted on male students only.
- (2) The research was conducted on a small sample (only thirty participants were the part of research).
- (3) The research was limited only to the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted on Pashtun students in City University of Science and Information and Technology, Peshawar. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews to the participants using purposive sampling technique. The study has proved that personality is flexible and is changing by learning a second language. The students become more extrovert and open minded as these are thought to be the distinctive characteristics of the native speakers of English language. Hence, the study also revealed that the students are gradually adopting these characteristics while learning English as second language because they associate them with the culture that the English people first, and the American people later, have promoted across the world through the use of their language and power. Therefore, learning English as second language may become a way of motivation for the Pashtun students to promote the culture represented by native English speakers. This study is also a motivation for future researchers to work on the influence of English language learning in the local context.

REFERENCES

- Alfarhan, I. (2016). English as a global language and the effects on culture and identity. *American Research Journal of English and Literature*, 1, 1-6. Retrieved from <https://www.arjonline.org/papers/arjel/v2-i1/10.pdf>
- Anbreen, T. (2014). The Influence of English Second Language Learning on Pakistani University Students' Identity. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 192 (2015), 379 – 387. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.06.054.
- Berkwits, M., & Inui, T.S. (1998). Making Use of Qualitative Research Techniques. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 13(3), 195-199. doi:10.1046/j.1525-1497.1998.00054.x
- Brown, H.D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5th Ed.). White Plains, N.Y: Longman.
- Chen, X.S and Bond.H, M. (2010). Two Languages, Two Personalities? Examining Language Effects on the Expression of Personality in a Bilingual Context. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 36(11), 1514-1528. doi:10.1177/0146167210385360
- Corr, P. J., & Matthews, G. (Eds.). (2009). *The Cambridge handbook of personality psychology* (pp. 748-763). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Etikan, I., Musa, S, A., and Alassim, S.R. (2016). Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1-4. doi: 10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11.
- Grosjean, F. (2011). Change of Language, Change of Personality? Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/life-bilingual/201111/change-language-change-personality>.
- Hirsh, B.J., & Peterson, B.J. (2009). Personality and language use in self-narratives. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 43(3), 524-527. doi: 10.1016/j.jrp.2009.01.006
- Jenkins, R. (2008). *Social Identity*. London; New York: Routledge. Retrieved from

- <https://konspektikaust.wordpress.com/2013/01/09/richard-jenkins-social-identity/>.
- Kachru, B. B. (1985). Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: the English language in the outer circle. In Quirk.R and Widows.G.H (Eds.), *English in the world: Teaching and learning the language and literatures* (pp. 11-29). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mahboob, A. (2003). The English language in Pakistan: A brief overview of its history and linguistics. *Pakistan Journal of language*, 4 (1). Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/816229/The_English_language_in_Pakistan_a_brief_overview_of_its_history_and_linguistics.
- Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: gender, ethnicity and educational change*. Harlow: Longman.
- Paik,J. (2008). Learning English, Imagining Global: The narratives of early English Education Experiences in South Korea. *The International Journal of Learning*, 15(10), 71-78.doi:10.18848/1447-9494/CGP/v15i10/45983
- Rahim, B. (2014, September 28). Will change in medium of instruction improve education in KP? Dawn News. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1134809>
- Saddiqa, A. (2018). The Role of Pashto (as L1) and Urdu (as L2) in English Language Learning. *Linguistics and Literature Review*, 4(1), 1-17.doi: 10.29145/2018/llr/040101.
- Toohy, K., Day, E., and Manyak, P. (2007). ESL Learners in the Early School Years. In Cummins.J and Davison.C (Eds.). *International Handbook of English Language Teaching* (pp.625-630). New York, NY: Springer.
- Wederus, T. (2017). *Changing Language, Changing Personality: Swedish Bilinguals on the effects of Speaking English*. Master's thesis, 15 ECTS. Supervisor: Paul Davis.
- Zhang, W., Su, D and Liu, M. (2013). Personality Traits, Motivation and Foreign Language Attainment. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 4(1), 58-66.doi: 10.4304/jltr.4.1.58-66.