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RESEARCH PAPER

A Psychological Anatomy of English Language Use by Both the Genders

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ABSTRACT

Societal expectations regarding language proficiency differ between genders, with a prevailing belief associating assertiveness more strongly with English fluency in females. This highlights a nuanced gender dynamic where language skills play a crucial role in shaping societal perceptions of competency, authority, assertiveness, and independence, particularly for women in Pakistan. Quantitative method has been used in this study to gather data from the students. The research investigates the impact of English on gender-specific language practices, revealing the perceived value of English proficiency for males rooted in gender stereotypes. This notion holds implications for educational and professional opportunities, necessitating cultural shifts to foster a more inclusive understanding of language proficiency. The strategic use of English by females as a tool for empowerment, challenging traditional gender roles is challenging. The study concludes with recommendations for policy reforms, cultural awareness programs, and professional development initiatives to address disparities and foster inclusivity.

Introduction

Heath 's (1983) research sheds light on the role of communities and their cultural practices in shaping language use (1983). Heath emphasizes that linguistic behaviors often mirror community values and social hierarchies. Sociocultural factors within a community, such as gender norms and socioeconomic status, significantly influence the linguistic strategies individuals employ to navigate and assert dominance.

John Gumperz's work on communication and cultural context underscores the importance of sociocultural factors in shaping linguistic interactions (1982). Gumperz's research highlights how cultural assumptions, including those regarding power dynamics, influence the selection of linguistic strategies during communication.

Jarvis and Pavlenko's (2008) exploration of bilingualism and language dominance reveals the effect of cultural values on language use. Pavlenko's work emphasizes that linguistic choices in bilingual contexts are often guided by individuals' perceptions of their social status and the cultural prestige associated with each language. Sociocultural factors play a pivotal role in determining which language is employed to assert authority and navigate dominance within specific contexts.

Literature Review

Language as a Tool for Domination and Control

Deborah Tannen's perspective sheds light on how linguistic choices can be wielded to establish control during conversations, particularly between genders (1990). Tannen argues that language serves as a conduit for asserting dominance by employing strategies

such as directness or indirectness. By adopting authoritative language or persuasive techniques, individuals strategically position themselves within discussions, effectively shaping the course of discourse while retaining a sense of control.

Dale Spender's examination of language as a tool for control further emphasizes its historical and contemporary significance (1980). Spender's work underscores how language, with its ability to shape perceptions and mold thought patterns, becomes an instrument for reinforcing existing power hierarchies. Within societal contexts, linguistic strategies can serve as mechanisms for maintaining established control systems, thereby perpetuating imbalances in power dynamics.

Robin Lakoff's research into linguistic features associated with women's speech unveils the subtleties through which language is harnessed to exercise control and dominance (1975). Lakoff highlights how traits such as qualifiers and hedges are employed to mitigate the impact of statements, allowing individuals, particularly women, to navigate societal expectations while subtly asserting authority.

Linguistic Strategies of Dominance

Deborah Cameron's exploration provides insights into gendered linguistic strategies that reflect power dynamics (1995). Cameron highlights that linguistic features associated with men and women can often contribute to the assertion of dominance. Men's language, for instance, might include more direct and assertive speech acts, while women's language may employ mitigating strategies that soften the impact of their statements. These strategies align with societal expectations and contribute to power imbalances between genders.

Similarly, Penelope Eckert's research delves into the role of linguistic variation in constructing gender identities and power relations (2008). Eckert's work demonstrates how linguistic choices, such as vocabulary selection or intonation patterns, can signify one's alignment with gender norms and, consequently, assert dominance within specific social contexts. Linguistic markers, in this sense, become resources for expressing gender and establishing authority.

Furthermore, Jennifer Coates' examination of gendered language and communication styles further underscores the distinct strategies that genders employ (1993). Coates discusses how women may employ more collaborative and supportive speech patterns, while men often utilize competitive and assertive language. These differences in linguistic strategies are intertwined with the negotiation of power and the reinforcement of gender-based dominance dynamics.

Language and power theory investigates how language can be used as a tool of power and oppression concerning gender. Research by Holmes (1995) and West and Fenstermaker (1995) examines how language may reinforce gender hierarchies and stereotypes or be used to challenge and subvert them.

Frameworks in Sociolinguistics for Exploring Language and Gender

In the realm of sociolinguistics, contemporary theories and frameworks have delved into the intricate relationship between language and gender. Furthermore, researchers have explored how situational and demographic variables play a pivotal role in shaping linguistic performance. Labov (1972) emphasizes that factors such as race, ethnicity, age, occupation, social class, family income, as well as sociocultural and educational backgrounds have long been subjects of examination. These variables are recognized as influential components that can significantly impact how individuals use language. Communication is a complex, context-dependent phenomenon influenced by interrelated variables. The dynamic

approach to the study of language and gender, one of the four strands in Coates's (1986) taxonomy, supports this perspective, with the other strands being the deficit, dominance, and difference models.

Genderlect Theory

Genderlect" is a contentious concept in sociolinguistics, originating with Weinrich's (1953) assertion that sex plays a significant role in language contact situations and has often been criticized for perpetuating social stereotypes (Motschenbacher 2007). Haas (1944) first identified three distinct gender dialect systems, based on the gender of the speaker and the addressee or their combination. It wasn't until the 1970s that the term "genderlect" was formally introduced to linguistics, describing a language variety associated with speaker gender/sex (Kramer 1974; Haas 1979). Tannen (1990) introduced the term 'genderlect' to describe gender-specific dialects, with the goal of elucidating traditional communication challenges between men and women and facilitating improved intergender understanding.

Evolution of Genderlect Research: From Linguistic Rules to Performative Activities

Genderlect research, dating back to the early work of linguist Robin Lakoff in 1973 (Fromkin et al., 2011; Motschenbacher, 2007), initially focused on languages with distinct linguistic rules for men and women. However, the concept of genderlect has evolved in alignment with the growing fields of feminist and gender studies. Modern interpretations treat genderlect as a performative activity rather than an inherent trait, as highlighted by Motschenbacher (2007). Motschenbacher emphasizes the need to study gendered practices as activities rather than as fixed characteristics.

Material and Methods

The participants in this study were selected from renowned educational institutions in Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan, where English serves as the medium of instruction. A total of 250 students were engaged in the study, representing graduate, postgraduate, and undergraduate levels. The data collection process for this study involved the distribution of a comprehensive questionnaire among the participants. The questionnaire distribution took place among the undergraduate students from the specified institutes in Rahim Yar Khan. Quantitative analysis will involve the use of SPSS software to process and interpret the questionnaire responses. Ethical considerations were paramount in the execution of this research. Clear information regarding the study's objectives and procedures was provided to participants, emphasizing voluntary participation, and informed consent was obtained before their involvement. Participant identities were safeguarded through unique codes, ensuring strict confidentiality with personal identifying information excluded from the study.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
English as Intelligence

Gender		Total	A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Student	Male	47	16	34	17	36	10	21	2	4	2	4.3
	Female	183	77	42.1	69	37	7	3.8	22	12	8	4.4

The survey results reveal a significant perception among respondents that individuals who are more proficient in English are viewed as more intelligent or capable in Pakistan. A substantial 79.3% of respondents agree (41.3%) or strongly agree (38.0%) with this notion. A smaller proportion (7.3%) maintains a neutral stance, while 10.0% disagree and 3.3% strongly disagree with the assertion. This data indicates a prevailing belief within the surveyed population that English proficiency is associated with enhanced intelligence

or capability, underscoring the societal importance placed on English language proficiency as a marker of intellectual prowess or competence in Pakistan.

Table 2
Psychological Effects of English

Gender		Total	A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Student	Male	47	18	38.3	13	27.7	9	19.1	5	10.6	2	4.3
	Female	183	91	49.7	58	31.7	17	9.3	15	8.2	2	1.1

Almost three-quarters of participants, 76.7%, express agreement (49.0%) or strong agreement (27.7%) with this assertion, underscoring the perceived psychological impact of language challenges. A smaller but still notable proportion, 14.0%, maintains a neutral stance on the matter, suggesting some level of ambivalence or uncertainty regarding the psychological effects of language barriers. Conversely, 8.0% disagree, and 1.3% strongly disagree with the idea that language barriers have negative psychological repercussions. In summary, the data emphasizes the widespread recognition within the surveyed population of the potential adverse psychological effects faced by non-native English speakers in Pakistan due to language barriers.

Table 3
Non-Native English Speakers Experience Inferiority

Gender		Total	A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Students	Male	47	24	51.1	16	34	3	6.4	3	6.4	1	2.1
	Female	183	90	49.2	68	37.2	13	7.1	9	4.9	3	1.6

A significant 82.3% of participants express agreement (51.0%) or strong agreement (31.3%) with this notion, emphasizing the perceived emotional challenges faced by non-native speakers. A smaller but noteworthy proportion, 9.7%, maintains a neutral stance on the issue, suggesting some degree of uncertainty or ambivalence regarding feelings of inadequacy. Conversely, 6.7% disagree, and 1.3% strongly disagree with the idea that non-native English speakers may experience inferiority when interacting with native speakers. In summary, the data underscores the prevalent belief within the surveyed population that language dynamics in interactions with native English speakers in Pakistan may contribute to feelings of inadequacy or inferiority among non-native speakers.

Table 4
English as Compulsory Subject

Gender		Total	A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Student	Male	47	25	53.2	16	34	5	10.6	1	2.1	0	0
	Female	183	83	45.4	81	44.3	9	4.9	10	5.5	0	0

This table exhibits that 49.3%of participants agree, and an additional 40.3% strongly agree that teaching English as a compulsory subject from class one privileges it over local languages. A smaller portion, 5.3%, maintains a neutral stance on the matter, while 5.0% disagree with this assertion. This data reflects a significant consensus within the surveyed population that making English compulsory from an early educational stage can be perceived as privileging it over local languages.

Table 5
English as Judicial Language

Gender		Total	A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Student	Male	47	24	51.1	20	42.6	3	6.4	0	0	0	0
	Female	183	82	44.8	74	40.4	17	9.3	9	4.9	1	1.5

According to the survey results, a significant majority of participants, 85.7%, agree (45.7%) or strongly agree (40.0%) that English being the judicial language in Pakistan dominates in law and justice. A smaller portion, 8.7%, maintains a neutral stance on the matter, while 5.0% disagree, and 0.7% strongly disagree with this assertion. This data highlights a prevailing consensus within the surveyed population that the use of English in the legal domain dominates and holds significance in the context of law and justice in Pakistan.

Table 6
Males Use English Dominate

Gender		Total	A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Student	Male	47	15	31.9	11	23.4	12	25.5	9	19.1	0	0
	Female	183	50	27.3	35	19.1	37	20.2	54	29.5	7	3.8

According to the survey results, 49.7% of participants agree (29.3%) or strongly agree (20.3%) that males tend to use their English language skills to dominate or assert power over others in Pakistan. Additionally, 21.0% maintain a neutral stance on this issue, while 26.3% disagree, and 3.0% strongly disagree with this assertion. This data suggests a notable perception within the surveyed population that English language skills among males may be utilized as a tool for dominance or power assertion in Pakistan.

Table 7
Males Having Greater Access to English

Gender		Total	A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Student	Male	47	11	23.4	12	25.5	7	14.8	13	27.6	4	8.5
	Female	183	46	25.1	46	25.1	36	19.6	41	22.4	14	7.6

As per the findings, 67.6% of participants agree (40.3%) or strongly agree (27.3%) that males have greater access to resources facilitating English language learning in Pakistan. Moreover, 17.3% maintain a neutral stance on this issue, while 12.7% disagree, and 2.3% strongly disagree with this assertion. This data suggests a mixed perception within the surveyed population regarding the equality of access to English language learning resources for males in Pakistan.

Table 8
Males as More Competent

Gender		Total	A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Student	Male	47	15	31.9	13	27.6	7	14.8	12	25.5	0	0
	Female	183	71	38.7	37	20.2	37	20.2	31	16.9	7	3.8

The survey results indicate that 57.3% of participants agree (36.3%) or strongly agree (21.0%) with the perception in Pakistani society that males are considered more competent or authoritative when they speak English than females. Additionally, 19.0% maintain a neutral stance on this issue, while 20.0% disagree, and 3.7% strongly disagree with this assertion. This data underscores a prevalent belief within the surveyed population that a gender-based perception exists regarding competency and authority associated with English language proficiency in Pakistani society, with a tendency towards agreement.

Table 9
English as Independence for Females

Gender		Total	A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Student	Male	47	17	36.1	12	25.5	10	21.2	6	12.7	2	4.2
	Female	183	68	37.1	71	38.7	22	12	20	10.9	2	1

The results reveal that 74.0% of participants agree (41.3%) or strongly agree (32.7%) with the association in Pakistani society that fluency in the English language is often linked with assertiveness or independence for females. Additionally, 13.3% maintain a neutral stance on this issue, while 11.3% disagree, and 1.3% strongly disagree with this assertion. This data emphasizes a widespread belief within the surveyed population that there is an association between fluency in English and the perception of assertiveness or independence for females in Pakistani society, with a clear tendency towards agreement.

Table 10
Females Use More English

Gender		Total	A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Student	Male	47	16	34	13	27.6	9	19.1	7	14.8	2	4.2
	Female	183	75	40.9	84	45.9	12	6.5	11	6	1	0.5

A sizeable group of survey participants, 79.7%, agree (40.0%) or strongly agree (39.7%) that females are inclined to use more words, phrases, or clauses of English while speaking Urdu. Additionally, 11.3% maintain a neutral stance on this issue, while 7.7% disagree, and 1.3% strongly disagree with this assertion. This data suggests a notable perception within the surveyed population that females may incorporate more English elements into their Urdu speech, with a clear tendency towards agreement.

Discussion

Despite the perceived notion that males have superior access to resources for learning English, an unexpected trend emerges, indicating that males tend to use more subordinate (Urdu/regional) language in natural communication compared to females. This paradoxical finding suggests that, instead of relying on English proficiency, males may prefer a dominant language style to assert authority or educational status, possibly indicating less pressure on them regarding language use.

Conversely the findings show that though females have limited access to language learning resources, yet they adopt a linguistic strategy by incorporating more English words and phrases when speaking Urdu. This nuanced approach could signify a compensatory mechanism, with females leveraging their language skills to bridge resource gaps. The utilization of additional English elements in their communication serves as a strategic tool for females to assert educational competence and navigate social hierarchies.

This intricate interplay of language use, resource access, and gender roles challenges conventional expectations, revealing that both males and females employ distinct linguistic strategies in navigating social and educational landscapes. Males, despite potentially having greater access to resources, lean towards local or subordinate languages, while females, potentially constrained by resource limitations, and strategically enhance their communication with English elements, incorporating more English words and phrases. This unexpected intersection underscores the necessity for a deeper understanding of the multifaceted ways individuals navigate linguistic challenges and societal expectations, moving beyond simplistic interpretations of gender and language dynamics.

Conclusion

Societal expectations regarding language proficiency differ between genders, with a prevailing belief associating assertiveness or independence more strongly with English fluency in females. This highlights a nuanced gender dynamic where language skills play a crucial role in shaping societal perceptions of competency, authority, assertiveness, and independence, particularly for women in Pakistan.

The findings consistently show a prevailing perception that females in Pakistan tend to use English more than males, whether expressing educational status (80.0%) or in social settings (72.3%)The findings reveal a perception that both genders in Pakistan may use English for dominance, with a higher agreement percentage for females (67.0%). This challenges the traditional gender dynamic in linguistic dominance, where males typically dominate females. Despite English being considered superior, females seem to leverage it, indicating a shift in power dynamics. Further research is needed to understand the motivations and consequences of this evolving language use pattern among females in Pakistan.

Recommendations

- Consideration for policy reforms in education to address disparities in English language teaching and promote inclusivity.
- Implementation of cultural awareness programs to foster understanding and appreciation for local languages alongside English.
- Professional development programs for educators to enhance their awareness of gender dynamics and implement inclusive teaching practices.
- Initiatives promoting language equality and recognizing the importance of both local languages and English in societal contexts.

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