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Education as a Site of Identity Construction: Linguistic and Cultural Perspectives from Pakistan

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Abstract

The paper critically examines language, culture, and identity with respect to educational environment in Pakistan as a complex relationship. Being a multilingual and culturally diverse nation, it is important to note that the education system in Pakistan is significant in determining the identity of students, which is achieved by the linguistic policies and classroom practices. The study examines the role of the use of Urdu, English and regional languages in promoting the culture belonging of students, academic achievement and social integration. Results indicate that English is linked with modernity and social economic mobility, Urdu is linked with a sense of national unity and regional languages enhance cultural identity. Nonetheless, this Linguistic hierarchy causes tensions and this aspect adds to cultural marginalization and identity conflicts among the learners. The paper suggests that education policy needs to adopt linguistic diversity in order to promote inclusive education and cultural harmony. It proposes the use of multilingual education models, teacher training and culturally responsive curricula as solutions to the gaps and empower students with diverse lingual backgrounds. On the whole, the paper reveals the necessity of a moderate approach to language policy that helps to promote the unity of the nation and cultural pluralism.

Keywords: Language and Identity, Culture in Education, Multilingualism, Pakistan, Educational Policy, Cultural Diversity

Introduction

Before delving into a deeper focus on how language, culture, and identity form an imperative part of this discussion let us take some

time to define what language, culture, and identity mean. The integration of such ideas explains the general effects on students' cultural selves, achievements, and welfare. Linguistic and cultural diversity is a feature of Pakistan and the education policy can be seen as a multilayered phenomenon reflecting the relationship between language, culture and Identity in the socio-cultural context of Pakistan.

Language as a Concept in Education

It is established that language is an essential tool in human interaction and bears prominence in significant aspects of learning. Language in this case is not only a tool of interaction but also the bearer of the culture and the mirror reflection of identity. Language is a medium through which students are taught and it offers a vital part in the learning achievements and cultural dissemination of learners.

Context Culture in the Teaching and Learning Process

Organizational culture is therefore a deep seated concept that is very vital when it comes to the shaping of educational experiences. Culture plays a critical role in determining how people use language, and how they deem to interpret reality in their day to day lives. In educational institution, culture can be seen in the syllabuses, teaching methods and even policies of the school. Cultural competence/training is important in learning institutions since it plays a key role in elimination of prejudices in learning institutions.

Language, culture and identity: an intersecting paradigm

Language, culture, and identity: All three concepts are very closely intertwined and are often to be found in an intricate interaction. Language is not only the way of people's communication but also the culture's bearer and a people's reflection. Culture is interwoven with language: culture in terms of norms, values and belief system, and language from a cultural perspective. Given that identity involves language and culture, it cannot be anywhere else but developed in a certain social cultural and historical context.

The Pakistani Context

Linguistically and culturally diverse country, Pakistan has more than 60 linguistic Deserts spread across it. Pakistan has two official languages, which are Urdu and English; however most of the people in the country speak regional languages including Punjabi, Sindhi and Pashto or Afghanistan languages. There is a bilingual and multicultural education environment throughout the country

which explains the presence of both public and private schools, and madrasahs, and other religious schools.

The Research Gap

However, literature, culture and identity are pivotal elements in education and there is little research done in this field. The present research focuses on language, culture, and identity as a relatively unexplored domain in Pakistani context and as a scarcity of research that has specifically targeted language policies and practices, its effects on the students' cultural identity, and academic performance.

The Significance of the Study

The present research will attempt to fill this gap through examine how language, culture, and identity are negotiated in education in Pakistan. In the study, the author explores the effects of language policies and practices for students of color's cultural and academic self-actualization and offers suggestions for culturally sustaining pedagogy. The study advances the current knowledge of how language, culture and identity intersect in education and offers specific pointers for fostering culturally sensitive and inclusive education.

Research Questions

1. concerning the language, policies and practices in Pakistani context: To what extent do they marginalise and / or affirm the students' cultural selves and their school achievement?
2. How does a review of language policies and practices impact culturally sustainable and culturally sensitive educational practices in Pakistan?
3. In what ways can educationalists in Pakistan adopt cultural sensitivity in educational processes?

In this research, data collected from 100 students will be employed along with data collected from 10 educators through interviews. The results of the survey show the quantitative picture of the students' language practices and cultural affiliations as well as their academic achievements. The interview data comprises quantitative values for observing the educators' attitudes towards language policies and practices.

The relationship of language, culture, and identity in education casts many issues which have a direct impact upon students' cultural identity, academic performance, and global health. It is therefore the propose of this study to enhance knowledge regarding the dynamic connection between language, culture and identity in educational context of Pakistan and give suggestions for

improvement of the issues related to cultural diversity in classroom context.

Literature Review

This cross-sectional relationship of language, culture, and identity in education is a topic of research interest that has received much attention by several researchers across the globe. Use of language is inseparable from human interaction, and language indeed constitutes a key component in the educational process. Studies have indicated that language is not an instrument of communication only, but also, an index of culture and identity (Baker, 2011,; Cummins, 2000). For students, language is a medium of instruction that has a direct bearing on learners' academic achievements and the construction of their cultural.

[唐] For learners, language is the channel of instruction that has an immediate impact on students' performance and students' construction of cultural.

Culture is also a very general concept and is also an important factor that determines learning environment. Intonation, too, has been found to be an aspect of culture, together with language, which shapes the way by which people view and address the world around them (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2010). Culture manifests itself in how classrooms are run, what is taught, how it is taught and even the rules that need to be followed all fall under the culture column. Cultural sensitivity is important in teaching learning environment since it facilitates the creation of learning environment that is sensitive to cultural difference amongst students.

Self-identity also correlates with language and culture, and has a great influence on education process. It was found out that identity is influenced by different social, cultural, and historical contexts and that identity involves language and culture (Hall, 1997; Norton, 2000). In academic contexts, identity as seen by ways that students use language, practice culture, and learn in academic domains.

Pakistan is a Multilingual and multi ethnic country having more than sixty languages spoken all over the Pakistan. Besides Urdu and English as the official languages of Pakistan, people speak the regional languages like Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto it were etc. In the case of Pakistan the relation between language policies and practices has concern with the students' cultural identity and their

achievement in academic terms as concluded from the existing researches of Rahman, (2004 & Shah, (2010).

Those practices have emerged from Pakistan's colonial past and its current efforts to maintain stability in the face of linguistic and cultural differences. Several studies has established that language policies and practices in Pakistan have consequences on equality, students' cultural identity and academic achievement (Rahman, 2004; Shah, 2010). For instance, the adoption of Urdu and English as medium of instruction fascinated the students speaking regional languages according to Rahman (2004).

Because of the above arguments culturally responsive and inclusive education should be implemented to foster students cultural identity and achievement. The available literature indicates that culturally sensitive and inclusive educational practice contributes to learning environment and student cultural and academic achievement (Gay & Howard, 2000; Nieto, 2010).

In sum, there are many ways that language, culture and identity interdependently influence education and the fostering of the students cultural identity and academic achievement. Previous studies have indicated that language policies and practices, cultural sensitivity and multiculturalism, and educational diversity policies are important antecedents of students' educational experiences.

Methodology

In this research endeavour, both qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collection and analysis were used. Quantitative data was collected using the survey questionnaire and qualitative data through interviews.

Both students and educators from both private and public sectors of schools in Pakistan were interviewed in this study with the total 100 students and 10 educators. The participants were chosen using a statistical method known as the stratified random sampling method to help achieve a representation from each geographical area, income level and language in the student population. The teachers chosen for the study were identified by purposive sampling in order to achieve variability in terms of course taught and years of teaching practice.

The students were asked a set of questions in the survey questionnaire in an aim of capturing quantitative data pertaining to the students' language use and cultural identity, and their academic endeavors. About 30 questions were included in the questionnaire which combined multiple choice questions, Likert

scale and few questions with open ended answers. The interview procedure had an objective of getting qualitative information from educators on several issues in language policies and practices, multiculturalism, and culturally sensitive practices in learning institutions. The doors-to-information-gathering grew wide with the application of the 15 major questions, which were all of the “open-ended” category.

This study used the survey questionnaire that was taken through self-reporting from the students. The questionnaire was administered in the classrooms of the students and they were allowed 30 minutes to fill it. Most of the educators were interviewed through a face to face approach. The interviews were performed in a low noise of environment, and free from other individuals, and its duration was about 45 minutes.

The quantitative data was analysed descriptively and inferentially. The data was keyed into statistical software package (SPSS) and frequencies, means and standard deviations were computed. Parametric methods of analysis-inferential, inclusive of t-tests and ANOVA- were utilized in an endeavor to study the interactions between language use, cultural identification, and academic encounters. When analyzing the qualitative data, the study adopted a thematic analysis technique. The interview transcripts were read and re-read in order to code and themed the data. The themes were then categorized in to patterns and relationship.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

The quantitative data was descriptive in nature thus the study used descriptive statistics in analyzing the study participants' characteristics. The results are presented in the following tables:

Fre :: Variable | Frequency | %Age |

| --- | --- | --- |

| Age | | |

| 18-20 | 40 | 40% |

| 21-23 | 30 | 30% |

| 24-26 | 20 | 20% |

| 27-29 | 10 | 10% |

| Language | | |

| Urdu | 50 | 50% |

| English | 30 | 30% |

Local languages | 20 | 20.0 per cent |
Academic level		
Undergraduate	60	60%
Graduate	40	40%

Inferential Statistics

Descriptive statistics were also employed to analyse the correlation between language usage and the degree of cultural identification or academic experiences. The results are presented in the following tables:

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Language use	3.5	1.2
Cultural identity	4.46	1.75
Academic experiences	3.8	1.3

For correlation, the result Pearson's correlation was used to test relationships between language use, cultural identity, and academic experiences. The results are presented in the following table:

Variable	Bilingualism	Ethnicity	Schooling
Speaking and Writing	1	0.65	0.58
Social/Ethnic Identity	By Culture	.65	1
Academic expositions	- .58	- .72	- 1

The outcomes show that there was an ordinal relationship between language accommodation, cultural orientation and scholarly interactions.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis of data has been used to analyze the findings from interviews done to the educators. The results are presented in the following themes:

Theme 1: Language Policies & Practice

The participants of the study said that setFlash/policies and practices in Pakistan affect students' cultural self-identifications and achievement. Writing about the Language Mediums & Their Educational Implications they opined that whereas Urdu and English is being used as mediums of instructions this puts a disadvantage to those who speak regional linguistic.

Theme 2: Cultural Responsiveness

Cultural competence was stressed as a critical variable in nurturing learner's cultural selves and achievement. They pointed out that the best teaching practices that reflect the students; cultural backgrounds can improve students; learning environment.

Theme 3: An undoubtedly key aspect of effective practise as understood by this paper is an emphasis on inclusion of disabled students in mainstream education.

The survey showed that teachers said that the desegregation policies are essential in enhancing the cultural values and academic achievement of learners. They pointed out that method like differentiation in instruction and assessment would assist in reaching out for the individual students and the rest.

Mixed-Methods Data Analysis

In order to merge the quantitative with the qualitative data collected during the study, the concurrent mixed-methods data analysis was employed. The results are presented in the following tables:

Variable | Quantitative results | Qualitative results |

| --- | --- | --- |

Language use | Moderately and positively | Significant effects of language policies and practices on student cultural affiliation and academic functioning: Educators' perceptions |

Cultural identity | Found a strong and positive relationship between language use, academic experiences, Cultural Identity | According to educators, they focus on cultural relevance in the development of students' cultural selves and academics.

Multilingual academic experiences | Positive relationships with the use of certain languages and cultural orientation | These experts confirmed that qualitative learning environment that corresponds to the cultural background and identity of children is essential in learning setting |

Discussion

The conclusion of this study has underlined several aspects of linkages between language, culture and academic performance in Pakistan. Based on the findings of the study, this paper provides evidence that language policies and practices are influential in reconstructing culture and student achievement. The adoption of Urdu and English as the media of instruction pose a disadvantage to the students who speak regional language, this we have seen

taking a toll on students leading to language shift as well as cultural assimilation.

Major about this study is the positive relationship between language use and cultural identity that has been determined. This implies that those students who speak their regional languages are most likely to retain their cultures. Similar to the previous research that established the significant relationship between language and cultural identity (Baker, 2011; Cummins, 2000). These findings of the study also indicate that language policies and practices affect the students' cultural identities. These mediums of instruction are Urdu and English and as such students from the regions speaking other languages may be placed at a disadvantage given the shifting cultural dynamics that arise from the domination of English and codification of Culture.

The results of the study also speak to the notion of culturally relevant pedagogy. The interviewed educators stressed multiculturalism as the key enabling students' cultural selves and academic achievement. This study is in tandem with past studies that have posited that the use of culturally relevant teaching behavior fosters a culture free from bias in learning processes (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2010).

The other key findings of this present study are on the recommendations on the adoption of Inclusive Educational Practices. And similarly, the participants said that Inclusive Education is important in affirming students' cultural self and achievement. The present study agrees with the previous studies that assert that integration of worthy educational practices improves academic achievement and reduces the rates of students' dropout (Banks, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

This research has important policy and practice implications for education in Pakistan as an emerging South Asian country. First, the study shows how language planning is important especially as it relates to developing word, image and symbolic systems that would allow for the representation of language and or languages differences and diversities. This may comprise offering resources and advocacy for learners using regional language at school, and advocacy for the use of regional language in school. Second, the study emphasizes the importance of culture-sensitive instructional methodologies. This could include offering professional development to teachers on culturally appropriate curricula and regularly persuading teachers to include students' culture and

experiences in and out of the classroom into lesson delivery. At the end of the study, the issue of inclusion in education is also underscored. It can also refer to the way, curriculums are developed to suit the cultural aspects of students or giving the students a chance to learn different cultures.

Altogether, the conclusion of the present research shows that language practices, cultural affiliation, and academic preferences in Pakistan are multifaceted interconnections. These are the following implications and recommendations for the educational policy and practice for the Pakistani context to improve the linguistic rights of children. The first implication of this study is that there is the need to engage in language planning.

Findings

The study's findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Language use and cultural identity: Another worthy appreciable positive relationship is between language use and cultural identity pointing to the fact that, the more the students use their regional languages, the more likely they would be to retain their cultural identities.
2. Language policies and practices: The use of Urdu and English as media of instruction acts as a lost of conduits for students from regional language Speaking (RLS) areas as this involves language shift the cultural loss.
3. Cultural responsiveness: Simley, academy members stressed cultural relevancy in relations to the youth cultural self- Weiter- Identitätsentwicklungs and achievement.
4. Inclusive educational practices: The study also highlighted how teachers stated that all classroom processes were essential to guide students' cultural selves and educational achievement.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Language planning: provide cohesive and comprehensive language plans which accept more linguistic diversity, differentiate support for students from regional linguistic backgrounds.
2. Culturally responsive teaching: Cultural competence training for educators with regards to their students' culture and integration of students' cultural assets into the classroom practices should be encouraged.
3. Inclusive curriculum design: Specifically: Incorporate students' cultural assets into design curricula and offer the students cultural experiences to enrich their perception.

4. Language support services: Offer interpreting and translating for those students, who speak regional language and promote students to stay connected with their native languages and customs.
5. Policy reforms: To encourage policy changes that will endorse multilingualism and diversity, you ought to support students who speak regional languages.

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