Pakistan Social Sciences Review
www.pssr.org.pk

RESEARCH PAPER

Influence of Social Background on English Language Proficiency at Secondary Level

Hafiz Muhammad Qasim [1] Dr.Masroor Sibtain [2] AbdulHameed [3]

1. Lecturer, Department of Applied Linguistics, GC University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of English, Govt. College of Science, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan
3. M. Phil Scholar, Department of Applied Linguistics, GC University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
	The present study aimed to investigate the influence of social background on the students' performance of English at the secondary school level. 150 students and9 teachers of the English languagefrom six public secondary schools of D. G. Khan were selected as data using stratified sampling and systematic random sampling techniquesrespectively. The study used cross-sectional survey design. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data from students and teachers. Quantitative data were summarized using descriptive statistics and presented and tabulated, while qualitative data were put under themes and presented in the narratives. The study found that the use of mother tongue and cultural knowledge had a negative influence on the performance of English. The use of mother tongue impinges on their proficiency. The study recommends that teachers should come up with interactive teaching methods regarding the English curriculum

Introduction

Pakistan is linguistically and socially a diverse country as people with different languages and social backgrounds live here. English, in Pakistan, is an exogenous language, as are Arabic and Persian. Both Urdu and English have been used as the official languages of Pakistan since 1947. English continues to hold the status of official language as well as the medium of instruction in Pakistan. The social background of the learners and the use of mother tongue in language classrooms have an impact on the process of language learning. The use of local languages, in English language classrooms inPakistaniinstitutes is common. The

present study aimed to investigate the influence of social background on the students' performance of English at the secondary school level in D. G. Khan.

Statement of Purpose

The use of the first language and social background of the learners in the institutions at the secondary levelaffect students' performance in the English course (Mwangi, 2009). Therefore, it is necessary to examine how the first language influences the learning and performance of the second language as well as to know the role of the social background of the learners in the process of L2 learning.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to investigate the use of the first language and assess the difficulties of the learners of English at the secondary school level in D G Khanto check the perceptions of the teachers and students about the use of L1 in the classrooms and assess the ways to improve the conditions of L2 learning.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The present paper is based on the theory of acculturation (Schumann, 1978). This theory is based on the fact that language acquisition occurs as a result of acculturation, meaning the "social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language (TL) group" (Schumann, 1978, p. 29; Dowling &Sipamla, 1991). The most important part of this theory states that acculturation, which is a melting of social and psychological elements, is mainly the reason why people can acquire a second language. Any student can be placed on a continuum that goes from a far distance to proximity to the native speakers of the language being acquired. The level of language acquisition will then be affected by the level of proximity to the native speakers of that language(Schumann, 1990).

Conceptual Framework

In this paper, the relation between L1, culture, economic situation, and acquiring language abilities for writing and reading, and then performance in English were examined. Output was assessed in terms of students' performance in the language.
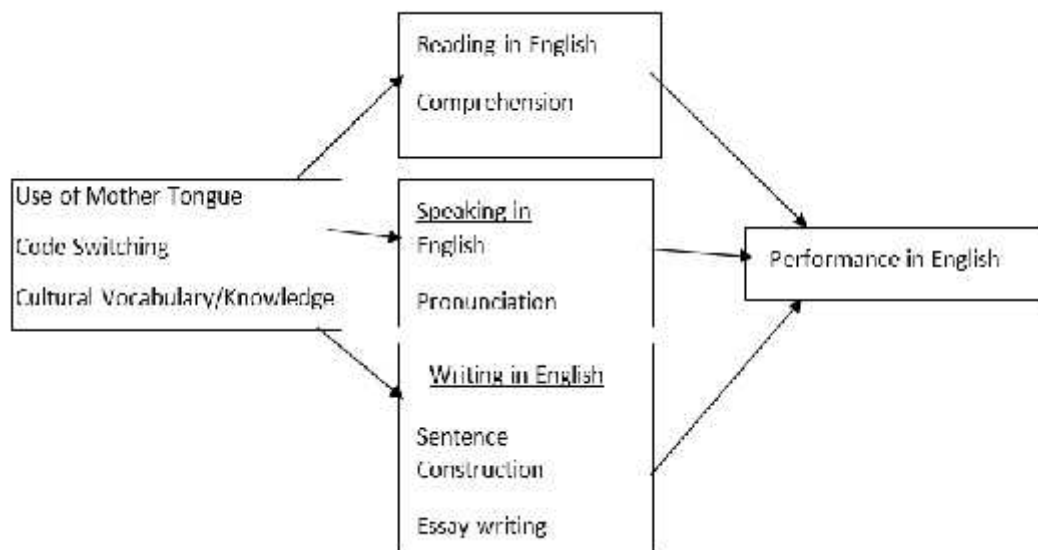
Figure 1: Relationship between Use of Mother Tongue, Culture and Performance of English

Figure-1 summarizes how L1, code-switching, and knowledge of vocabulary influence the acquisition of strategies in the target language and performance as a result. The theoretical framework shows thatthese factors influence the acquisition of strategies using reading comprehension activities by building up sentences and writing essays, and speaking by practicing pronunciation. The first language seems to be influential on these skills and it will influence performance as well.

Previous Studies in the Field

Various researchers have examined the role of L1in L2 classrooms and the role of the social background of the learners in the process of learning L2. Lado (1995) found that some factors as motivation, age, anxiety, and memory, tolerance, learning strategies, gender, L1 skills, bilingualism, and quantity of input,impact the process of learning L2 positively or negatively. Mwangi (2009) concluded that the use of L1 in ESL classrooms has negative effects, and the social background of the learners also impacts the process of learning L2.Ouma (2010) also discovered that students who performed poorly were from the background where they mostly used their mother tongue and their exposure to English was rare.Adebayo (2008) studied the impact of the use of L1 in language classrooms in the context of Nigeria. He concluded that the use of L1 at the primary level may have positive effects on learning English.Ayodele (1988), Falayajo (1997), and Kolawole& Dele (2002) suggested that students should be exposed to the target language in schools as soon as possible.

Materials and Methods

Table-1 presents a summary of the target group, target population, sample population, sampling procedures, sample number, and the sample percentage.

Table 1
Summary of Sampling Matrix

Target Group	Target population	Sample Population	Sampling Procedure	Number Sample	Percentage Group(%)
Schools	22	6	Simple random sampling	5	25%
Teachers	26	9	Purposive sampling	9	100%
Students	2,310	615	Stratified, systematic sampling	150	25%

Instrument of Data Collection

Following Macmillan (1992), the questionnaire was used as an instrument for gathering information from the students (covering their responses about their background, use of L1 in class, their views on L1 influence on L2, L1 restriction, issues caused by L1 and abilities used in L2 learning) and teachers (regarding the foundation, utilization of primary language, their impression on the impact of L1, measures to check the use of L1, difficulties created by L1, and systems to enhance the use of L2). Three classifications of validity were taken into account: face, content, and construct validity.

Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data were sorted out, coded, and compressed utilizing SPSS, rendition 20.0. When gathering the crude information, the surveys were coded into numerical qualities which were then entered into the PC. The broken-down information was compressed utilizing enlightening insights e.g., frequencies and rates, and exhibited utilizing tables and visual charts. As indicated by Gay (1996), when making the outcomes known to an assortment of peruses, basic descriptive statistics have an extensive favorable position over more unpredictable measurements.The Likert summated rating scale was used to examine questionnaires.

Analysis and Findings

The authors provided a total number of 150 queries in 6 institutions in DG Khan in August 2016. All the questions were then given back.Hertman&Hedborn (1979) are of the view that 70 % or higher questionnaire return rate is great. As a result, a total number of 150 forms were examined. This part of the work tries to provide background information about the subjects, discussing their gender and age, for example. It also examines the class learners belong to, and instructors' background in teaching.

Background information about the Subjects

Gender Distribution of the Student Participants

Out of the 150 participants, half were male and the remaining females. Following Lado (1995), when researching language, both genders need to be represented since both of them have distinct opinions and views on the use of L1 and L2.

Age Distribution of the Student Participants

The age distribution of participants is summarized as under:

Table 2
Responses on Age Distribution of the Students Participants

Students Age	Frequency(f)	Percentage %
13-14	131	87.3
15-16	19	12
Total	150	100

N=150

Table 2 depicts that most of the participants (131= 87.3%) were between 13-14 years, while (19=12.6%) were between the age of 15-16 years. The results show that most of the subjects attended secondary institutions and went either to grade 9 or grade 10 and so their opinions can be representative of other students in the same age range and conditions in the Pakistani context. The information about the age of the subjects was crucial when analyzing students' background in secondary institutions, particularly those who belonged to 9th and 10th grade, which was the target subject intended.

Class of the Student Participants

Grades 9 and 10 were regarded as the senior ones in the fraternity, and as a result, they are thought to provide important data. Table 3 below shows the information regarding their grades.

Table 3
Class of the Students Participants

Students Age	Frequency(f)	Percentage %
Ninth	75	50
Tenth	75	50
Total	150	100

N=150

Table 3 shows that (75) 50% were formed 10th class, while (75) 50% were form 9th. It shows that the distribution of the students was between form 9th and 10th class students.

Gender Distribution of English Teachers

Table 4
Gender Distribution of Language Instructors

Teacher Gender	Frequency(f)	Percentage %
Male	4	44.4
Female	5	55.5
Total	9	100

N=09

Table 4 depicts that the female language instructors who took part in the research were (5) 55.5%, whereas 4 (44.4%) were males.

Length of Teaching Experience

Table 5 depicts the experience of the teaching of the instructors.

Table 5
Responses on Length of Teaching Experience

Teaching Experience	Frequency(f)	Percentage %
1-5	2	22.2
6-10	3	3335
11-15	4	44.4

N=9

Table 5 shows that 4 (44.4%) of language instructors had been teaching for more than 10 years, 3 instructors (33.3%) had been teaching from between 5-10 years and only two instructors had taught for less than 5 years. As a result, a total number of 77.7% of the instructors had taught between 5-15 years, showing that they had a suitable experience of teaching the language, and being able to give their useful perspectives on how the use of L1 and how culture and lexis can affect the performance in English.

Prevalence of use of mother tongue in DG Khan District

This part of the research tries to answer the first research question, which tries to find out if the use of L1 in secondary schools in the DG Khan District was frequent. This was researched by asking several questions in the Proforma. Instructors and learners were supposed to answer if they used L1 in class and if they code-switched and they were also asked how frequently they did so.

Students' Response on Prevalence of Use of Mother Tongue

When trying to investigate the use of L1, learners had to answer questions regarding whether they switched languages in class or not. Table 6 shows a summary of the results.

Table 6
Students' Responses on Prevalence of Use of Mother Tongue

Statements	Responses			
	Yes		No	
	(f)	%	(f)	%
English teachers switch languages during the presentation	121	80.6	29	19.3
Students switch languages during conversations in school.	123	82	27	18

Table 6 shows that 80.6% of the learners concurred that they used code-switching; whereas, 19.3% answered that their instructors did not do that. The results also show that 80.6% of language instructors switch languages in the classroom. The use of this process seems to be high in classrooms, and they shift from L2 to L1 to make it more comfortable for learners, encouraging tolerance of the use of L1, as Ariffin(2009) claims, there is more than 80% of the use of this practice in Pakistani classrooms.

Apart from this, learners had to answer if they switched code between L1 and L2 in conversations in the classroom. Table 6 depicts that 82% of the total number of learners said that they practiced this during their conversations, whereas the rest of them did not do so, at least in the classroom. This shows that there is a high usage of code-switching by the learners. Following Ariffin (2009), code-switching encourages tolerance in the usage of L1, and the results confirm that students made great use of L1 in secondary schools of DG Khan. 44% of the people showed that their instructors did not use code-switching. 30% claimed that their language instructors seldom did it, and 24% were of the view that their instructors did it frequently. Only 3% claimed that their instructors code-switched all the time. Even if almost half the instructors did not code-switch, the rest of them did it frequently, very frequently, or seldom was of more than 50%. This depicts that there are a lot of people who code-switch, so L1 seems to be frequently used in the classroom.

Table6 shows that most learners most of the time use code-switching; whereas, a quarter of them do it very frequently and the other quarter does not do it often. Only 10% of the learners said that they did not code-switch at all. The total number of learners who do it frequently and who rarely do it is of more than 85%. This shows that code-switching is very frequent and thus the use of L1 seems to be high.

Besides, when trying to determine how frequently L1 is used in the classroom and then to answer the first research question, the research tried to establish how frequently students used the L1 in the class.

Table 6 shows that the majority of learners, almost 35% claimed that they did not use their L1 frequently, whereas 28% claimed that they used their first language in class. Another 19% of the learners said that they used their L1 all the time. Only 20% of the learners showed that they never used the L1 in class. As a result, the percentage of learners who used very frequently their L1, who use it often and seldom use it is 80%. This depicts that there is a high usage of L1 in secondary schools of the DG Khan District. As a result, it is likely to become a hindranceto students' performance, asNjoroge (1987) claims: high use of L1 in the classroom means high influence in the performance of English.

Teachers' responses on the prevalence of use of mother tongue

The research endeavored to discover the use of L1 by teachers and if they code-switched or not. Instructors had to answer if they spoke L1 in the classroom, how often if so, and if they used to switch languages. They also had to answer if their learners answered or participated in their L1. Table 7 shows the results of these queries.

Table 7
Teachers' Responses on Prevalence of Mother Tongue

Statements	Very Often	Often	Rarely	Not at all
How often do you speak in mother tongue in class	-	-	(8) 100%	-
How often do you switch languages during teaching?	-	(3) 37.5 %	(5) 62.5 %	-
How often do studentsspeak the mother tongue in school	(5) 62.5 %	(2) 25.0 %	(1) 12.5 %	-

As per table 7, all the instructors never used L1 in the class. Nevertheless, most of them (65%) said that they switched codes though not very often, and 35% claimed that they did change languages in the class. None of them was on either extreme of the continuum.Taking into the findings, all the instructors changed languages in class. It shows that there is a high use of L1 in the classroom and that policies allow this to happen.

Most of the instructors (almost 65%) showed that learners used L1 almost always, whereas a quarter of them showed that learners used L1 not very often. Only one of the teachers said that the learners never used L1 in the class. As a result, almost 90% of the learners seem to use L1 very frequently and some others used it not very often. These results show that the prevalence of the use of L1 in secondary schools of DG Khan is truly high. When carrying out the interviews, instructors reflected some of the elements that made code-switching possible. One

instructor from school 2 claimed "We code-switch when illustrating complex situations, especially when teaching literature genres like oral poetry, riddles, and tongue twisters. Switching languages helps us to explain and emphasize concepts (School B English Teacher, August 21, 2016)." This expresses a similar idea to that exposed by Merrit et al. (1992) discovered that trying to help students understand the content is one of the factors of code-switch. As a result, these results depict that even if there is a low number of instructors who use L1 in the classroom, there is a high rate of language instructors who code-switch. This has a negative impact on the performance of English. Table 8 summarizes the teachers' responses regarding learners' use of L1 in the class.

Table 8
Teachers' Responses to Whether Students Speak in Mother Tongue

Teacher Response	Frequency(f)	Percentage %
Yes	7	82.6
No	2	17..3
Total	9	100

N=09

Table 8 shows that (7) almost 85% of the instructors were in accord that learners used L1, while15% did not agree to that. There is a high frequency of use of L1 by learners in secondary institutions of the DG Khan District.

Perception of teachers and students on the influence of cultural knowledge (local/native vocabulary) on the performance of English

This part finds the answer to the second research question and tries to discover how learners and instructors view the influence of culture and lexis on the performance of English. The subjects of the study had to answer queries that aimed at getting their views and opinions on the influence of these features on students' performance of English. Table 9 shows the results.

Table 9
Students' Responses on the Influence of Cultural Knowledge on Performance

Statements	Responses			
	Yes		No	
	(f)	%	(f)	%
Local Cultural Knowledge of teachers in conversations influencesthe performance of English.	112	74.6	38	25.3
Students use local vocabulary during conversations in school.	117	78	33	22

Table 9 shows that almost 75% of the subjects claimed that the knowledge of vocabulary and lexis of their instructors had an impact on their performance in

English, while the rest claimed that the knowledge of their instructors had no impact on their performance of L2.Since the high use of code-switching, there is a high impact on the performance of English in secondary schools of DG Khan. Kolawole& Dele (2002), support the same idea. In almost all the cases, language instructors in the secondary schools already mentioned resorted to using code-switching or using local lexis to explain the concepts, and this affects the performance in English. The results seem to indicate that culture and vocabulary and language instructors have a deep impact on the performance of English.

Most of the learners (almost 80%) are certain that the use of lexis regarding their language had an impact on their performance in English, while 20% were not in accord. As a result, most of the learners say that the use of local lexis impacted their performance of English. This concurs with Dulay& Burt (1977), who examined the mother tongue's impact on L2 learning and discovered that most of the learners claimed that there is a transfer of L1 in the L2. The results, therefore, show that using local lexis influences students' performance in English.

Perception of Teachers on the influence of Cultural Knowledge on Performance in English

When the language instructors were inquired about their views on the use of culture and lexis and the impact on English, all of them claimed that there was a deep impact on the performance of L2. Language instructors provided several reasons to explain why they thought so. They said that many learners were not able to express their ideas in a good way and, as a result, committed several mistakes regarding structures. Instructors also claimed that during the interviews, learners were influenced by the issue of direct translation and did not have an extensive vocabulary, which further limited their communication skills. A language instructor from School 3 claimed that:

"It is obvious that cultural knowledge influencesthe performance of English from all facets; writing, pronunciation, reading, and listening. In writing, students always directly translate the mother tongue along with cultural knowledge to English. In pronunciation, they find it difficult to articulate English sounds, while in reading and listening they find difficulty in comprehending what they read or hear" (School C English Teacher, August 25, 2016)

Another instructor claimed that she was concerned with the culture of their learners. She claimed, "Our students are so much used to mother tongue and cultural knowledge. They always converse in the mother tongue and often involve cultural knowledge. This affects their writing skill. Resultantly, sentences are a complete mess!"(School D English Teacher, August 27, 2016). Instructors who participated in the interview agreed that culture and lexis had an impact on learner's grammar and syntax since this background knowledge interfered.

Particularly, one of the instructors said, "Construction of sentences is influenced by the use of mother tongue along with cultural knowledge. The structures and vocabulary are completely mixed up!" (School D English Teacher, August 27, 2016). This resemblesOdlin(1989), who states that interference is a transfer of strategies that will hinder comprehension and then learning of the second language. Also, the use of L1 and background knowledge had an impact on spelling and pronunciation of phonemes that differ from those of L1. Table 10 shows these results.

Table 10
Teachers' Responses on Perception of the Influence of Cultural Knowledge on Performance of English

Responses	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA
Students, who use the cultural vocabulary, perform poorly in English.	4 (44.4%)	2 (22.2%)	1 (11.1%)	2 (22.2%)	
Students who do not use cultural vocabulary are better in English.	4 (44.4%)	5 (55.5%)	--	--	--
Use of cultural vocabulary performance of English.	3 (33.3%)	6 (66.6%)	--	--	--

Table 10 shows that almost 45% of the instructors are in strong accord that learners who use native words do not perform well in L2, while 25% only concur. On the other hand, 25% of the instructors did not concur that those who used cultural lexis performed badly in English. None of the instructors strongly disagreed, and only 5% of them were not clear. As a result, 65% of the instructorsconcurred that lexis and L1 impacted negatively in English. These results agree with what Hasindu (2011) claims that bad performance in English results from the learners' use of L1 and their cultural lexis when they engage in conversations. As a result, the worst performance in the English language in secondary institutions of DG Khan might be due to the high use of culture and local lexis.

Most instructors, (65% concurred that learners who use L2 in conversations, perform better in English, whereas 35% strongly concurred. This depicts that the total number of instructors concurred that learners who speak English in the class perform better in English. These results confirm that the usage of the English language in communication encourages the use of English while using the L1 in communication affects the performance of English in secondary institutions of DG Khan.

These results agree with the ones of Mwangi (2009), who claim that the bad performance of students in English is the consequence of their use of L1 in communication. Similarly, secondary institutions need to motivate the use of English in the classroom. Table 11 depicts that more than half of the total number of

instructors claim that the use of local lexis has an impact on the performance of English, while the rest are strongly in accord with this idea. None of the teachers was sure or disagreed. These results confirm that the use of cultural lexis influences the performance of English. This idea is similar to Gacheche's (2010), who claims that bad performance in that language was related to the use of L1 and local lexis as a means for communication in the classroom.

The interviewees claimed that the use of local lexis of learners had an impact on the classes they lead. One of the instructors from School 5 claimed that "It takes too long to describe the issues, events, and occurrences simply because students aren't familiar with English and are more familiar with mother tongue and cultural values, for instance, we read a passage at least twice for students to understand" (School E English Teacher, August 28, 2016). Cummins (2000) agrees with this and claims that learners need to have agency over their learning of the language to be able to feel comfortable when communicating in English. Frequently, instructors had a hard time when explaining content because of the limited lexis of the students. Another problem that was mentioned by instructors is that leaners used translation as a method to answer questions in class, then hindering comprehension among instructors and learners, particularly when the instructor does not have the same L1 as the learners. A language teacher from school 4 claimed, "As a result of the use of mother tongue and local vocabulary by students, they can hardly read and understand the set texts; this affects the pace of covering the syllabus of English. We find difficulty in explaining concepts since our students have limited vocabulary" (School D English Teacher, August 25, 2016).

Strategies to improve performance in English

This part of the research tries to answer the fourth research question, which tried to discover which skills were used to improve the performance in English. It also examines the measures that need to be taken to improve this situation, what is currently being done, and which materials or resources are needed in the process of learning a second language. Table 11 shows the answers of the learners.

Table 11
Responses of Students on Strategies to Improve Performance in English

Statements	Responses			
	Yes		No	
	(f)	%	(f)	%
Encouraging students to read the story helps them improve performance in English.	103	68.6	47	31.33
Learning resources for English available in school influences performance in English.	78	52	72	48

Table 11 shows that 70% of learners claimed that motivation to read books in English helped them improve their command of the language, whereas 30% did not agree with this claim. Also, 52% of the learners claimed that there were not many

resources available in English and this influences the performance, while 48% were of the contrary opinion. These results depict that motivating learners to read in English and giving them a variety of resources, aids them in improving their command of the language. Also, instructors had to answer queries about strategies on how to improve performance. Table 12 shows the results.

Table 12
Teachers' Responses on Strategies to Improve Performance in English

Statements	Responses			
	Yes		No	
	(f)	%	(F)	%
Punishing students for speaking in the mothertongue helps them improve their performance in English.	6	66.6	3	31.33
Learning resources contributes to the improvement of English.	8	88.8	1	12.2

Table 12 shows that (6) 66.6% of language instructors claimed that when their learners are punished for using L1, they speak better in L2, while 31% of the instructors were of the contrary opinion. The results show that when learners are punished for communicating in their L1, they do not use it anymore and start using more and better L2. The results also show that the use of L1 has a negative impact on the performance of English. Almost 90% of the instructors agree that teaching materials improve the learners' performance in English. Therefore, institutions should try to provide enough teaching materials for the students to improve their command in the English language.

Some learners felt that instructors should not mix up languages. They thought that this was not helpful for language learning. The resources seem to be poor and this is detrimental in the acquisition of ESL (Ouma, 2010). The learners wanted to be motivated to communicate in L2 and to be praised for their performance. They would wish their institutions to buy books and resources for them to read and to increase their language abilities. They identified the need that they should be rewarded when they use English in the class, as well as building up libraries for them to have the opportunity to read in the second language. They suggested the programs to enhance their communication skills.

Similarly, the instructors suggested that the learners should be motivated to use the L2, read books in the language, and then react to those pieces of discourse. The instructors also agreed that there isa need for suitable teaching materials and conversation clubs in the institutions to enhance the learners' language abilities.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the learners' use of L1 is widespread in the secondary schools in DG Khan. The learners and instructors both use code-switching for several motives. It is not beneficial for the performance of students in English. The use of L1 created problems of speaking and writing in the target language for the learners. They faced a lack of self-confidence.These challenges can be overcome by an encouraging environment for the students to use English in the classroom. The learners and instructors both perceived that L1 negatively affects the process of learning L2. To restrict the use of L1 in the classroom, some measures may be taken by the authorities to come up with teaching methods that are interactive in the English curriculum to allow the students to interact with one another in English.

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