

## Sociolect And the Cognitive Development of Youth

<sup>1</sup>Shumaila Ahmad, <sup>2</sup>Sidra Haroon, <sup>3</sup>Ghulam Hafsa

<sup>1</sup>Lecturer of English, PhD scholar, Department of Linguistics & Communication, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, shumaila.ahmad@umt.edu.pk

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer of English, Department of Linguistics & Communication, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, sidra.haroon@umt.edu.pk

Principal of Degree College, Government Degree College, Khushab

### Abstract

The undertaken study is a theoretical investigation into the concept of sociolect and its influence on the cognitive development of language users. Current study reviews the wide tiers of varied linguistic features and to mark an established relationship among them. As Heller (2007) says that the practices of language are socially and politically enroot. This paper revealed the occurrence of changes in Urdu language usage in our youth by the influence of sociolect and resultantly unveil those factors which become the cause of certain changes. This study underlain the impressive behavior of our youth towards extreme practice of English lexis in their social media language/sociolect. Although English is a lingua franca all over the world but such an excessive use of this language created a schema in our youngster's mind that more they use it, the more they will be called modern and educated. The present study has revealed the existence of linguistic variation at certain level in Urdu language. Qualitative research paradigm has been used which is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It is used to examine the change happening in our Pakistani English. Research has been conducted through collecting different status updates randomly and by collecting some comments of the active users of social networks by taking prior consent to those certain social media users.

**Keywords:** Sociolect, Social Media, Impressive behavior, Lingua Franca, Schema, Social network

### Introduction

Language is the tool which is used to express feeling and interconnect with others. Language is the center of human life and communication is the essence of any language. If it is observed closely, language is not a mere word rather a complete system, starting from signs, symbols and sounds that end with a specific meaning that speaker wants to convey. As Heller (2007) says that the use of language is socially and politically enroot. Urdu enjoys the status of national language in Pakistan and side by side other provincial varieties are also used which gave a multilingual status to our society. On other side English contemplates being an official language and awarded with highest rank in the country. This hegemony of English language traced back to European imperialism, Pakistani government's careless attitude toward policies of language and peoples' attraction towards it which implies the H/high language- language of high status associated with English language in electronic and social media forums (Ehsan& Abdul aziz ; 2014).

## **Language and Society**

When a language is used in a changing social environment and in a current situation, many variations occur in phonology, morphology, vocabulary and grammar. The overtly used language possess peculiar structural and language scheme which is reflected from its semantic aspects. These language features are frequently apparent in their phoneme, lexis and formations of sentences. Resultantly, a new variety has been evolved by non-native speakers to manage the communication requirements. The evolution of new languages for the sake of communication is marked by creativity. Plurilingualism is primarily the root of language creativeness (Talaat 2002). These differences are so vast and have a long history that they can be assumed to be constant and can be viewed as differences in the English language per se instead of steps in the new English style as the original(Quirk, 1985).

Language is not an ordinary game of words until one gets the appropriate meaning Lyons (1981) talks of words and meaning. Two points are promoted by him: first that word doesn't symbolize the meaning indeed. It is the job of linguist to explain the words certainly and second the languages are typically isomorphic (these differ in lexical structure). Lyons (1981) additionally sets an association that additionally, there occurs a social connotation which is rather liberated but keeps social rules and social relations. When social meaning and language with reference to social settings is argued, indication in this respect is taken from Hudson (1981) who describes sociolinguistics as a phenomenon which lies in the connectivity of social system and language. Lyons (1981) further defines ethno-linguistics as the inquiry of linguistic habits in association with culture where culture is engaged in the same sense as is done in anthropology and social sciences. Later receiving these two definitions, we come to know about a direct relationship between language and society or language and culture. It means that language is shaped and changed by the society and its users. Todd (1987) also has the view that language is designed by the style acceptable to other fellows of that culture. Language is a breathing phenomenon. Language used by each generation is handed down by the earlier generation. But it is changed to suit the individual necessities of the succeeding generation. Likewise, a different and special form of language can give individuality to a cultural group by bonding the insiders and sporting the outsiders. Education, social context, age, gender, morals all will affect words and grammar articulated by individuals (Rasul, 2013).

Cook (1991) believes that contextual knowledge is shaped by the culture. Each minute of this information is known as a script. Together schema and script perform a central part in the understanding of language. The vital component in the understanding of discourse was given the name of script by Schank (1997) also. This idea aided a lot in constructing computer programs also that would comprehend human languages also. The foundation of this organizing was that computer did not understand various terms which the human being did for granted. The influence of society is made clear that it forms a background knowledge and script with in our mind which helps the learning of language.

## **Social Media and English Language**

Internet becomes an entire new dimension of global communication which is ready to influence our language use. Social media inspired worldwide use of English as much that other languages are being affected by it very badly (Crystal, 2001). A survey reported that in the middle of 90's, almost 80% international websites are developed and functioned in English language (1997).

## **Cognitive Development of Language and Social Media**

The main objective of social networks is to transform computerized language in such a way as people learn their languages by using other networks (Al-saleem, 2011). According to Feuerstein (2003) mediation is the first step in language development process among human learning is successful, if learners interact with each other and share their problems and find some solutions. When they overcome with this problem then

they could enter towards the next phase which is called development. While vygotsky (1967) claims that mediation is the central tool in human's language learning process.

### **Socio-Cultural Theory**

Tappan (1998) describes three main points of Vygotsky's assumptions

- 1) The mental abilities of learners can be determined explicitly mostly as they demonstrate their enhanced analyzing and interpretative abilities.
- 2) Cognitive skills are entrenched in vocabulary, language and varied types of discourse, these all counts as psychological tools which smoothen and transmute mental happenings.
- 3) Cognitive skills initiated from societal relationships and lies in a sociocultural backdrop.

In relation to get the ideas of children cognitive functioning by following developmental approach we require to know its beginning and transformation from one step to other. In this way a specific mental process like inner speech cannot be judged in haphazard manner but need to observe in a step by step process.

As the second argument of Vygotsky; he said that cognitive functioning can only be understood by examining the function of the tools which mediate and design it, and in cognitive functioning language is the most important tool. Vygotsky claim that in critical period language start to be used as a tool that govern child to plan some activities and find some solution of problems.

Third claim of Vygotsky with it our research concern, is that cognitive skills belong to social relations and culture. According to him child's development cannot be separated from social and cultural influences. His argument of progression in recollection, consideration and logical thinking encompasses knowledge to determine the novel ways of society, like language, logical schemes and remembrance approaches. According to Vygotsky's theory knowledge is positioned and collective (Collins & Rensick, 1996; ROgoff, 1998).

The abilities of knowing is categorised by society and surrounding in which things, artificial entities, apparatuses, books and communities exist. This gave the idea that knowledge can be enhanced in a best way through interaction and being habitual in certain cooperative activities. His theory gave a unique and beneficial claim about the relation between development and learning. This belief takes towards the idea that cognitive functioning has social origins.

### **Social Cognitive Theory**

Alfred Bendura (1996) introduced social competence theory as an original aspect in progressive cultural settings. This novelty of inquiry presented trans-culture discerned of social competence theory perceives its antiquity, formation and purpose of apparent self-efficacy and additional socio-cognitive factors in child growth (Bandura, 2001).

The factors which include in sociocultural systems are:

- 1) Perceived efficacy regulate learning activities and help in mastering theoretical assignments.
- 2) Apparent societal efficiency involves developmental and management of relational interactions.
- 3) Alleged ones-managerial abilities include lessening fellows' influence to engage in unfavorable happenings.

Perceived self-efficacy play different role in different cultural environments, cultures are no longer remaining constant. Global forces and telecommunications brought a new collective consciousness. Values,

language, ideas, beliefs, and styles of behaviors and living are interchanged and transmitted at a fastest pace.

### **Linguistic Variations and Social Media**

The distinctive social use of language reflects the variant demands of time which is exhibiting from the practices of people. This phenomenon is explicated from the use of Urdu language of the socialites who intentionally or unintentionally use English language while interacting through certain platforms of social sites (SNS). It can be seen as a sign of societal respect. This is because of great influence of social media that the young generation used to share their life instances as general status, professional positions, societal or certain phenomenon based content to their relatives or friends. Resultantly, the semantics aspects of language get change as per that situational effect of social media on its users. This media house shed such a strong significance on its users which causes plurilingualism among its users as can get the insight by observing the situation of Urdu illiterate speakers that they are able to communicate by using the roman script of Urdu. This change of linguistic habits can be observed at three tiers of language i.e. phonic effect, meaning aspects and formations of expressions. The new and new words are replaced by an eccentric grammar (Trask, 1994). In Pakistan, the individuals are very commonly used to say sorry or thank you, instead of "our thoughts" and "thank you", it is done subconsciously or can be or be conscious because English is a great social wonder of that time because it accepts the global language to interact with each other.

### **Semantic Change**

The inclusion of lexical relations like metaphor or metonymy generate a change in the words, their senses, and also in their certain situational usage. All this interior and exterior change occurs due to the influence of social media. This effect also leads to the change in the meaning aspects of language (Campbell, 2004). The varied ways has been introduced by researchers to determine this change in language. Geeraerts (2010) has introduced a clear distinction between Semasiological & onomasiological system. The change in meaning as per its scope i.e. micro or macro level has been shared by Traugott & Dasher (2002). The former level determine the meaning of each word as its track record of usability. The later level of study helps to predict the meaning of words as per its linguistic or cross linguistic makeup. Repetition of certain forms of English is quite common in SNS, often mere expressions like hmmm, mmmm, ymmm, awwetc are sufficient to illustrate an object or something complete. The social media users used to comment the other users shared content which could be done by just one word or even expression of like. Therefore, it creates a kind of illegitimacy in the linguistic expression of language users. Social media sites like twitter that condense their thoughts. Its mean that some of the spelling is abbreviated into shorthand form then the new language is created. Some of the internet items are like LOL (for "laugh out loud"). This expression is applied to convey a sense of joke or cheerfulness. There is another example of abbreviated word is ASL, this is unique word only uses in the chat room which means (for your age). There are some evident which is taken form Facebook where the internet user frequently use shorthand spelling Msgng, f9, gudnite, SMS, OMG, LOL, W8,

The influence of this platform can be seen primarily from the written expression of users that they condemn the use of full expressions i.e. sentences/phrases. This phenomenon can be observed by the excessive practices of nominalizations or verbatim on this forms e.g. "I'm going to send him a message on Facebook" to "I'll FB her". This particular linguistic behavior of this form has also influenced the language use of its users. For example, the form tweet has implied certain restrictions on its users that they cannot exceed the limit of 140 words which enforced its users to concise their expressions no matter to meet this requisite.

### **Socio-Cultural Factors**

Language plays an important role within a society. It is the basis of a culture and society. A person speaks to provide clues of his/her social identity. According to British point of view, within a society English speaking person possesses a good position as compared to others. It becomes a compulsion for other members of a society to speak or mixing up a standard language (ENGLISH) in their own language or to ignore their own language. Our present social structure is based on British social structure in the treatment of both languages. We cannot separate a language from its culture or society because it is an important part of both i.e. society and culture. The British knew this so they presented the Urdu and Punjabi cultures as uncivilized and inferior by making it compulsory for their servants and waiters to wear the dress of sardars, chaudharies and nawabs, especially the turban which is considered the sign of prestige. This inferior portrayal of Urdu culture left a permanent impact on our minds and became the cause of unrelenting ourselves with our culture and language or to mix up it with the English language. Modernity is the main part of every society (Crystal, 2000). So it also affects the people's especially the language of youth with the impact of social media and above mentioned reasons to make them as the members of digital (social) world or society and to meet with its needs e.g. Urdu/English code switching or the use of shortened words like "u" for "you", "r" for "aur" (in Urdu) and omission of apostrophes like "cnt" and "isnt" has become integral part of youth's language on social media (net, sms/chats) as it is the part of youth's community so they cannot apart from their community (Tuner, 2009).

### **Social Status**

Standard language like English or mixed language of digital world (social media) is considered as a language of social status, power, and social position as well as prestige rather than a language of information and library language, etc. Power and status are those qualities which help a language user to get much respect and value as compare to the speakers of other languages, a good status includes goods, houses, cars, good food, etc. or it may include self-esteem and pleasure. A powerful language is one that enables its speakers to get higher status in compare to others. A prestige language has much importance in modern and industrial societies rather than agricultural or other societies. So to get higher status and power in a society one will have to speak a powerful language (Rehman, 2003). As English and mixed (digital/shortened) language has become a language of the upper class of society because it is considered a modern, civilized language as well as the language of employment so it has become a trend within the youth to make it the part of their language to get power, status and good position or to be honored by their community (Phillipson, 1992).

### **Research Methodology**

The qualitative paradigm of research has been chosen which is further narrowed down to exploratory research technique. Content analysis has also been applied to analyse the linguistic choices of social network by the users of social media to reveal the agenda of the research.

### **Population**

The Facebook users are targeted as the population of this study.

### **Sample**

The sampling strategy is convenient, through which status and comments were used as a sampling data of the research. This data is taken randomly from the walls of Facebook users with their consents.

### **Data Analysis**

The concurrent study is foregrounding the patterned speech choices among adults at different linguistic levels, i.e. morphology and syntax which implies specific factors to be revealed while analysing the data.

## 1. Urdu noun phrases in English sentences

A word or cluster of words which acts for instance the subject, complement or object of a clause. In Pakistani English we use Urdu phrases very often. There are some examples of these noun phrases which happen in our social networking language (Anwar, 2007).

- “Respected **Judge sahib**plzzzzz do justice in ur own son’s case....”
- “Trying to replace **samosas and pakoray** with some **Phal/sabzi** at **iftar**.... But how can I resist”
- “Someone z jealous with us who think we r **chuntissss**”
- “She deserve **Tamgha e jurat**., what a brave lady”

## 2. Urdu adjective phrases in English sentences

Adjective phrase can be a word or clusters of words which work together of an adjective to show some quality. In Urdu language adjective phrase do the same task that it qualifies the noun. Here in these examples we will observe that how we use Urdu adjectives within an English sentence.

- “Finally come back to **My Okaat**... ☹**ekphateetchersa** mobile in my hands”
- “Iqbal, a sage, a seer, a **dervish**, a **faqeer**, a **wali**, a **hakeem**, and an **ashiq-e- Rasool** (SAW)”
- “Imagine how shameless and **beyghairat** these **siyasatbaaz** ministers are.
- “So much **cu2 saa and Nice habits wala baby**., I have been seen!! Love to play with a lit master”
- “**GuriyaaaaaaaJaaaaaan** ,,,,, cutest ever MSA”

## 3. Urdu Verb Phrases in English Sentences

Verb phrase is a word or cluster of words which act as a verb. In Urdu language auxiliaries come at the end of verb while in English it’s the reverse process. In Pakistani Urdu-English code switching verb phrases also used for instance;

- “I am getting boarrrrrr,,**plzzzzzzkuchkertayhainyar**!!!!!!”
- “**Tumheitungkernaykaapna hi mazaahaiyrrrr**.... Love u jani”
- “Hahahaha,, we did long time **Parhaaaaaaiiii**., in the silence of library,, with **song suntayhuway**”

## 4. Urdu conjunctions in English sentences

A conjunction is a word which merely joins together sentences, and sometimes words. Conjunctions join together sentences and often make them more compact. In Pakistani English Urdu conjunctions are used to join two sentences together, let’s see how this happen;

“We reached there in time, **lakin** nobody was there to receive us”.

“What did uwguyx do in uni today ..... ?? I wanted to come but my alarm.... /: **per** tomorrow I’ll come IA”

“Yeah I have done ur part 2 ,, **halaan k** it was not my responsibility at all”

“Literally been trying to avoid her ,, **isilye** not coming today”

## 5. Co-ordinated clauses

A group of words that forms part of a sentence, and has a subject and predicate of its own, is called clause. In Urdu-English code switching used in Pakistani English, Urdu or English conjunctions are used to join co-ordinated clauses. These co-ordinated clauses often used in spoken language too as we do sudden code switching in our daily use of language (Anwar, 2007).

“Hahahahahaha..... Indeed it was a great fun... really enjoyed a lot,,nd then **bus karukna, bus ka rush mein stuck hona awesome**”

“I miss ur fight,,, **bus jaldiwapisaajaoab**”

“Do such blunders,,, **Cztumhein permission haiyar**”

“Good keep it up!!! **Yehidillaga k parhnaykasahiii style hai**”..

“But u know I can’t do so, **Qkmeri creativity pe question mark aajyga:P**”

“Plz like Sufism page, **Isaycheck to kernayar**”

## 6. Sub-ordinated clause

English clauses are also used as subordinated clause in Pakistani English. Both English and Urdu languages combine where sometimes Urdu clause becomes the main clause or sometimes English becomes the main clause.

“Log kyakahenge” has murdered more imaginings than everything else in the domain”

“Paper me kyalikhnahai,,,Im in state of worry,,, plzzzzzz help me .....

“Jo jolikhshakti ho likhdena,,, No worries,, relax dear”

## 7. Inter-sentential changes

When code-switching happen at sentential or clausal level this termed as inter-clausal or inter-sentential level. In this data we will observe how phrasal changes happen at clause and sentence level.

“Breaking news...See the profile pic of her.... Ye kese ho gya,,, date likhoyaryaadrahaygi..... :P

“And the reports ends with a good end, love to be with u... khushi, daant, kamyaaabi, badnaami, bisti, sorry... khawaari...,sbkamaza tum k sathalagalaghai :D and yes we are gona miss report binding at Lahore photo shop”

“Mein bhi love the rain”

“I love Pak foj... my SherdilJawano..u r undefeatable”.

## 8. Genitive Phrases

Genitive case denote possession, it is used to denote authorship, origin, kind etc. In English we use ‘s as a possessive case. While in Urdu ‘ka/ki/ke’ is used to show possession. Let’s observe how this genitive case happens in Pakistani English.

“Heyy,, u doing smoking,, **Maakalaadlabigarrgya**”

“**Dilkibaat**,, its top secret yar”

“Waaaa,, just like **Gaokimutyaaar**.. stunning look”

“Why u take it soooo seriously, I was just kidding & u make it “**Ana kamasla**.”

## Discussion

The analysis section unveils that the language used by youth is considered to be variety of language, i.e. sociolect which is evidently distinctive from mentally constricted standard language in comparison to other vernaculars (Ktosinas 1994, Androutsopoulos 1998). This distinction is explicated in terms of the youth

specific use of language that is evident by their use of vocabulary, code-mixing and use of varied expressions are massively recognized due to mass media and social media effects (Labove 1992, Walter 1993, Klerk 1997). There are certain studies which also revealed the observance of non-standard morphological phenomena existed in the language of youth (Cheshire 1998, Rampton 1995).

Numerous intellects Several scholars presume that youth inclines to display an excessive proportion of vernacular variants at phonological and grammatical level despite sharing the similar background (Romaine 1984, Chambers 1995). Radtke (1990) and Schwitalla (1994) assert the accentuation of youth towards the use of global languages as compared to indigenous. The prevalent use of colloquial phonological features, i.e. assimilation and usage of slang is another emblem of youth (Leonard Bloomfield 1984, 49). In the pretext of analysis which reveals the existence of the occurrences of code-mixing, borrowing, varied idiolect and distinct use of phonology, morphology and syntax in the linguistic codes of youth. It can be clinched that youth is not just a name of biological stage but a reflection of societal association in terms of its strong inclination towards contemporary trends which are further perceived as an evolutionary process from immaturity to maturity. This evolution is correlated with society, i.e. social group, level of integration, occupation, local preferences or trends, intellectual level, socio-historical background, age, gender and many more contributing towards the development of sociolect which is definitely hampering the linguistic choices of users.

## Conclusion

The results of this research highlights that how social media become cause of variation in language. This also shows the connection of social media networks with our cognitive ability and schema building. How unconsciously the users are switching from one language to another. This research manipulates the influence of social media language on the youngster's schema building. This research further presented the code switching process at phrasal and clausal level in Pakistani English. Number of examples has been quoted to observe the phenomenon in comprehensive way. In a bilingual society where two or more languages are already spoken in our daily routine which makes it unusual to develop a comprehensive command on a single variety of language. As the world is a global village and we are interacting with many cultures and societies from a single click. So these interactions and communications also affect one's sense of society while adjusting to a different culture.

## References

1. Anwar, B. (2007) *Urdu-English Code-Switching: The Use of Urdu Phrases and Clauses in Pakistani English (A Non-native Variety)*. ESP World (ISSN 1682-3257).
2. Al-Saleem, B.I. (2011). *Language and Identity in Social Networking sites*. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science (Vol. 1 No.19; December 2011).
3. Bandura, A. (1997). *Social Learning Theory*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
4. Bandura, A. (2001). *Social Cognitive Theory: An Agentic Perspective*, *Annual Review of Psychology* (Vol. 52, pp. 1-26). Palo Alto: Annual Reviews, Inc.
5. Campbell, J.L. (2004) *Institutional Change and Globalization*, Princeton University Press.
6. Cook, V. (1991) *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching*, London: Arnold.
7. Crystal, D. (2001). *Language and the Internet*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
8. Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd Ed.), pp. 1-32. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
9. Ehsan, A, Aziz, S.A (2014). *Code-Mixing in Urdu News of a Private Pakistani Channel: A Case Study* SAVAP International (Vol. 5, pp. 160-169).
10. Feuerstein, R. (2003). *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding globalizations*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
11. Greeraert, D. (2010). *Theories of Lexical Semantics*, Oxford University Press.

12. Greeno, J. G., Collins, A. M., & Resnick, L. B. (1996). *Cognition and learning. (focus on sections on the cognitive/rational perspective)*. New York: MacMillian.
13. Heller, M. (2007). *Bilingualism as Ideology and Practice*, In M. Heller (Ed.) (2007). *Bilingualism: a social approach* (pp.1) United States: Palgrave Macmillan
14. Hudson, R.A. (1980). *Sociolinguistics*, Cambridge University Press.
15. Lyons, J. (1981) *Language Linguistics: An Introduction*, Cambridge: CUP.
16. Philipson, Robert. (1992). *Linguistic Imperialism*, London: Oxford University Press.
17. Quirk, Randolph; Greenbaum, Sidney; Leech, Geoffrey; Svartvik, Jan (1985). *A comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, Harlow: Longman. Pp. 1779.
18. Rahman, T. (1996). *Language and Politics in Pakistan* Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2003 reprint.
19. Rasul, S. (2013). *Borrowing and Code Mixing in Pakistani Children's Magazines: Practices and Functions*. *Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* (Vol. 5, No. 2. 2013).
20. Rogoff, B. (1998). *Cognition as a collaborative process*, in D. Kuhn and R. S. Siegler (Eds.), *Handbook of Child Psychology*, (Vol, 2, 5th edn) New York: John Wiley, pp. 679-744.
21. Schank, R. (1997). *Virtual Learning: A Revolutionary Approach to a Building a highly Skilled workforce*, McGraw Hills; 1<sup>st</sup>ed.
22. Talaat, Mubina. (2002). *The Form And Functions of English in Pakistan*. PhD thesis, BahauddinZakariya University, Multan.
23. Tappan, M.B. (1998). *Moral Education in the zone of Proximal Development*, *Journal of Moral Education*, 27, 141-160.
24. Todd, L. (1987). *An Introduction to Linguistics*. Essex, UK: Longman York Press.
25. Trask, R.L. (1994). *Language Change (Language workbooks)*, Routledge.
26. Traugott, C.E & Dasher, B.L. (2002). *Regularity in Semantic Change*, Psalidas.
27. Vygotsky, L.S. (1967). *Play and its Role in the Mental Development of the child Soviet psychology* (Vol. 5, No.3. pp 6-18)