

“Multilingualism as a resource for the Pashtun MS English students studying at COMSATS University, Islamabad, Pakistan”

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Abstract

This study explores the role of multilingualism as a resource for Pashtun students pursuing their Master of Science (MS) in English at COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan. The study investigates the impact of multilingualism on their academic performance and aims to identify how their diverse linguistic background serves as a valuable asset in their educational journey. A qualitative research methodology was employed, utilizing focus group interviews with eight MS English students from the Pashtun community. Moreover, this data collected through these interviews underwent content analysis and thematic analysis to derive meaningful insights. The findings reveal that multilingualism plays a significant role in enhancing the academic performance of Pashtun MS English students. It provides them with a unique set of language skills, including proficiency in

English, Urdu, and Pashto, which contribute to their comprehension of knowledge and facilitate effective communication. Multilingualism also grants them freedom, power, and privacy in specific discourse contexts, allowing for a deeper cultural understanding and the development of a strong cultural identity. Additionally, the study highlights the advantages of a multilingual educational background, demonstrating how it enables Pashtun students to become skilled communicators with effective grammar strategies. The research further explores the potential career opportunities that arise from multilingualism and discusses the challenges faced by Pashtun MS English students in developing proficiency in multiple languages. The findings of this study underscore the significance of multilingualism as a valuable resource for Pashtun students, emphasizing the need for educational institutions, policymakers, and educators to create supportive environments that harness and optimize the linguistic diversity of students.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Freedom in discourse, Power in discourse, Privacy in discourse, Grammar strategies

Introduction

Multilingualism, the ability to speak and understand multiple languages, has been recognized as a valuable resource in various domains of life, including education. In a diverse country like Pakistan, where multiple languages are spoken, the importance of multilingualism becomes even more evident. Pashto, one of the major languages spoken in Pakistan, is predominantly spoken by the Pashtun community, particularly in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Pashtun students pursuing their Master of Science (MS) in English at COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI), Pakistan, represent a unique group that benefits from their multilingual abilities. In a diverse country like Pakistan, where multiple languages are spoken, the significance of multilingualism becomes particularly evident. The Pashtun community, primarily located in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, is predominantly Pashto-speaking. However, many Pashtun students pursuing their Master of Science (MS) in English at COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI), Pakistan, possess multilingual abilities due to their diverse linguistic backgrounds. Despite the inherent multilingualism of Pashtun MS English students at CUI, there is limited understanding of how this multilingualism impacts their academic performance and serves as a resource for their educational journey. Therefore,

this thesis aims to investigate and shed light on the ways in which multilingualism functions as a resource for Pashtun MS English students at COMSATS University Islamabad.

Problem Statement

The Pashtun students pursuing their Master of Science (MS) in English at COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan, are inherently multilingual due to their diverse linguistic backgrounds. However, the impact of this multilingualism on their academic performance and how it serves as a resource for their educational journey remains relatively unexplored. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how multilingualism is a resource for Pashtun MS English students at COMSATS University Islamabad.

Research Questions

1. How does multilingualism impact the academic performance of Pashtun students of MS English at COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan?
2. How is multilingualism a resource for Pashtun MS English students at COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan?
3. In what ways does multilingualism enhance the academic performance of Pashtun MS English students at COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan?

Research Objectives

1. To investigate how multilingualism impacts the academic performance of Pashtun students pursuing MS English at COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan.
2. To explore and understand how multilingualism serves as a resource for Pashtun MS English students at COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan.
3. To examine the various ways in which multilingualism enhances the academic performance of Pashtun MS English students at COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

This research is significant for several reasons. First, it sheds light on the unique experiences of Pashtun students pursuing their MS in English at COMSATS University Islamabad. By understanding how their multilingual abilities impact their academic performance, the study aims to contribute to the existing literature on the

relationship between multilingualism and educational outcomes. Second, it emphasizes the value of multilingualism as a resource for Pashtun students, showcasing how their linguistic skills can be harnessed to enhance their academic performance. Third, the findings of this study can inform educational institutions, policymakers, and educators about the benefits of multilingualism and guide them in creating supportive environments that leverage the linguistic diversity of the students.

Scope and Limitations

This research focuses specifically on Pashtun students pursuing their MS in English at COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan. While this study recognizes the broader context of multilingualism in Pakistan, it primarily concentrates on the Pashtun community within the university. The research aims to explore the impact and benefits of multilingualism on the academic performance of Pashtun MS English students. However, it is important to note that the study's findings may not be generalizable to other universities or student populations in different contexts.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the research topic, outlines the research questions and objectives, discusses the significance of the study, and presents the scope and limitations. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature on multilingualism, academic performance, and the relationship between language and education. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology, including the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study and discusses them in relation to the research questions. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the study by summarizing the key findings, discussing their implications, and suggesting avenues for future research.

Literature Review

Wei (2020) defined 'Multilingualism' as the ability or practice of an individual or a community to use and understand multiple languages proficiently. It involves the capacity to communicate, comprehend, and express oneself in more than one language. In addition, Grosjean (2010) stated that multilingualism is "the regular use of two or more languages, either by an individual speaker or by a community of speakers" (p.16). Previous researches suggest that the notion of 'Multilingualism' can manifest in various forms, ranging from individuals who acquire multiple languages through formal education or immersion in diverse linguistic environments, to communities where multiple languages are spoken interchangeably or alongside each other. Moreover, Multilingualism provides cognitive advantages to individuals, such as improved memory, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills (Blackledge, A., & Creese, A. (2015). Furthermore, bilinguals have been found to outperform monolinguals in several academic domains, such as language arts, mathematics, and science (Baker,

2011). According to Grosjean, (2010) the concept of multilingualism emerged as a result of the recognition of the diversity of human languages and the study of language contact and language change. Grosjean, (2010) further explained in his research that in the past, multilingualism was often seen as a linguistic anomaly. However, in the 20th century, scholars began to view multilingualism as a complex and a dynamic phenomenon, with its own unique features and benefits. Additionally, the development of language contact theory and the study of language acquisition in multilingual contexts also contributed to the emergence of the concept of multilingualism as a distinct field of study. DIACONU, L. (2021), also in his study briefly surveyed multilingualism practices and its general consequences, and explored the benefits and achievements of multilingualism practices in education. Furthermore, DIACONU, L. (2021), is of the opinion that the imposition of one language on the other language is dangerous and would probably lead to language death.

It is therefore suggested in this study that multilingualism practices should be incorporated into educational settings to prevent language death. Thus DIACONU, L. (2021) concluded that depending on the composition of the society, multilingualism practices in education should embrace the indigenous, national, official and foreign languages as equal partners in the language policy development and education. Other than DIACONU, L. (2021), Dolgunsöz, E. (2013) also worked on the notion of multilingualism and its benefits educational settings. In his study, the difference between bilingual and multilingual learners in constructing grammar strategies was explored while learning (L2 for bilingual and L3 for multilinguals). Also, it was hypothesized that multilinguals have superior grammar strategies than bilinguals. In addition, Dolgunsöz, E. (2013) also revealed in his study that the number of languages known has a direct relationship with grammar learning strategy usage. This study also reflected that the multilinguals better understand and practice grammar than Bilinguals. As multilingual learners have one more language in their linguistic storage, they tend to use more grammar strategies and apply them more frequently since every new (learnt) language contributes to the acquisition of new grammar. Multilingualism has been recognized as a potential resource that can positively influence academic performance. Research suggests that individuals who are proficient in multiple languages often exhibit enhanced cognitive skills, such as improved attention, problem-solving abilities, and creative thinking (Bialystok, 2017). These cognitive benefits can transfer to academic settings, where multilingual students may have an advantage in language learning, critical thinking, and academic achievement (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, & Ungerleider, 2010). Being multilingual can provide Pashtun MS English students with a solid foundation for learning additional languages, including English. Studies have shown that students who are already proficient in multiple languages tend to acquire new languages more easily due to their enhanced language awareness, metalinguistic skills, and cross-linguistic transfer (Cenoz & Genesee, 2001). Therefore,

Pashtun students' multilingualism can contribute to their English language learning and overall academic success in the MS English program. Pashtun students at COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan, bring with them a rich cultural and linguistic diversity. Research indicates that educational environments that embrace and value students' diverse linguistic backgrounds can foster positive learning outcomes (García & Kleifgen, 2010). By recognizing and incorporating Pashto, along with other languages spoken by the students, into the curriculum and classroom activities, educators can create an inclusive and supportive learning environment. This inclusive approach not only preserves students' cultural identities but also promotes higher engagement and academic success. Multilingualism has been associated with the development of critical thinking skills. When individuals speak and think in multiple languages, they are exposed to different perspectives, cultural nuances, and cognitive frameworks (Kramsch, 2010).

This exposure facilitates the development of critical thinking abilities, including the capacity to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information from various sources. Pashtun MS English students' multilingualism can thus contribute to their analytical skills and enable them to approach academic tasks from multiple perspectives, enhancing their overall academic performance. Multilingual students often possess a strong sense of cultural and linguistic identity, which can positively influence their academic motivation and achievement (Gardner, 2010). Pashtun students pursuing their MS in English may draw on their multilingual abilities to connect with their cultural heritage, strengthening their motivation to excel academically.

This connection to their language and culture can provide Pashtun students with a sense of belonging and identity in the academic setting, further supporting their engagement and success in their studies. The existing literature highlights the numerous ways in which multilingualism can be a valuable resource for Pashtun MS English students at COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan. Multilingualism can positively impact their academic performance, language learning abilities, critical thinking skills, and cultural identity. Creating an inclusive educational environment that recognizes and embraces their linguistic diversity can further enhance the benefits of multilingualism and contribute to their overall academic success. By examining and Understanding these dynamics, educational institutions can better support Pashtun students and harness the potential of multilingualism in the educational context. Pashtun students who are multilingual may have an advantage in their MS English studies due to their diverse cognitive and linguistic skills, and multilingual background. Previous existing literature has dealt with the benefits of multilingualism in educational settings. However, no researcher has conducted a research to investigate the advantages of multilingualism for Pashtun MS English students. Therefore, research could be conducted to explore how multilingualism is a resource for Pashtun MS English students at COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan. Additionally, such a research could provide valuable and enrich insights into how institutions can better enhance

the academic success and cultural diversity of Pashtun students and other multilingual communities in Pakistan. This research would not only add to the existing knowledge but could also guide the future researchers who want to explore the same area, and they might conduct a similar study in another context.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to investigate the experiences and perspectives of MS English students belonging to the Pashtun community. Qualitative analysis was deemed suitable for this research as it aimed to gather in-depth insights and understanding from a diverse range of participants through interviews, enabling the attainment of desired results.

Population

The population of interest for this research comprised MS English students from the Pashtun community at COMSATS University Islamabad. The inclusion of multilingual students was a requirement of the study, as it aimed to explore the experiences of individuals with proficiency in multiple languages. By focusing on MS level students, the research aimed to capture the perspectives of individuals with a more advanced understanding of the subject matter.

Sampling

Convenience sampling was utilized to select participants for this study. This non-probability sampling technique involved the selection of individuals who were readily accessible and available to participate in the research. The researchers identified a total of eight participants from the Department of Humanities, all of whom were MS level students. To accommodate participant preferences and convenience, the researchers divided them into two focused groups. Convenience sampling, as defined by Hancock and Mueller (2020), is a method that relies on the accessibility, convenience, or proximity of potential participants as determined by the researcher. It does not adhere to a random or systematic approach to sampling. This technique allowed the researchers to gather data efficiently from participants who met the specific requirements of the study.

Theoretical framework

Epistemology refers to the philosophical framework or theory of knowledge that guides a research study. In the context of your research, social constructionism can be used as an epistemology to understand and analyze the impact of multilingualism on the academic performance of Pashtun MS English students at COMSATS University Islamabad. Social constructionism is a theoretical perspective that emphasizes the

social and cultural aspects of knowledge construction. It suggests that reality is not an objective, fixed entity, but rather a socially constructed concept that is shaped by social interactions, language, and cultural contexts. Social constructionism acknowledges the role of language, communication, and social interactions in shaping individuals' understanding of the world. Applying social constructionism as an epistemology in your research would involve recognizing that the experiences and perceptions of Pashtun MS English students regarding multilingualism are socially and culturally influenced. It would consider how language and social interactions contribute to the construction of their academic performance and the resources they utilize in their educational journey. By adopting a social constructionist approach, you can explore the ways in which the multilingual backgrounds of Pashtun students at COMSATS University Islamabad influence their academic performance and how they perceive and utilize their multilingualism as a resource.

You can investigate the social and cultural factors that shape their understanding of multilingualism and examine how these factors impact their academic experiences and achievements. Furthermore, social constructionism allows for an exploration of the role of language and discourse in shaping the students' academic identities, interactions with peers and faculty, and their access to educational resources. It encourages a focus on the social processes that contribute to the construction of knowledge and the negotiation of meaning within the academic context. To conclude, social constructionism as an epistemology provides a framework for understanding the socially constructed nature of multilingualism and its impact on the academic performance of Pashtun MS English students. It allows for an exploration of the cultural, linguistic, and social factors that shape their experiences, perceptions, and utilization of multilingualism as a valuable resource in their educational journey.

Data Collection

The data collection process involved the use of focus group interviews, which provided an opportunity for participants to engage in group discussions and express their views on the research topic. Focus groups are particularly useful for capturing diverse perspectives and generating rich, qualitative data. The participants were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives and their ability to provide insightful contributions to the discussions. During the focus group interviews, audio recordings were utilized to ensure accurate and comprehensive data capture. The use of audio recordings allowed for the preservation of participants' voices, ensuring the fidelity of their expressions and minimizing potential biases that may arise from note-taking or the researcher's interpretations. The audio recordings served as the primary source of data for subsequent analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data underwent a two-fold analysis process, consisting of content analysis and thematic analysis. Both approaches were employed to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the research questions and to provide a deeper

understanding of the data. Content analysis, as a quantitative or qualitative research method, facilitated a systematic examination and interpretation of the textual, visual, or auditory data obtained from the focus group interviews. Through coding and categorization, content analysis enabled the identification of patterns, themes, or trends present in the data. This method allowed for an objective exploration of the data to draw meaningful inferences and insights. Thematic analysis, on the other hand, served as a complementary qualitative research method used to identify, analyze, and interpret the underlying patterns or themes within the textual data. Following a systematic and iterative process, the data were organized, coded, and categorized to extract meaningful themes that capture the essence of the data set. Thematic analysis enabled a nuanced understanding of participants' experiences, opinions, and perceptions by uncovering the implicit meanings embedded within their responses. The combined use of content analysis and thematic analysis ensured a robust and comprehensive examination of the data, providing a balanced approach to data analysis. The researcher employed rigorous techniques to maintain transparency, consistency, and reliability throughout the analysis process. This study utilized a qualitative research methodology to explore the experiences and perspectives of MS English students from the Pashtun community at COMSATS University Islamabad. Convenience sampling was employed to select eight participants, who were divided into two focus groups. Data collection involved conducting focus group interviews, which were audio recorded to ensure accurate and comprehensive data capture. The collected data underwent a two-fold analysis process, consisting of content analysis and thematic analysis. Content analysis facilitated the systematic examination and interpretation of the data, while thematic analysis identified underlying patterns and themes. The combined use of these methods ensured a robust and comprehensive analysis of the data. The researcher employed rigorous techniques to maintain transparency, consistency, and reliability throughout the analysis process.

Multilingualism refers to the ability to speak, understand, read, and write in multiple languages. It can be considered a valuable resource with several benefits, both at an individual and societal level. Multilingualism is a valuable resource that facilitates effective communication, opens up professional opportunities, fosters cultural understanding, enhances cognitive abilities, and contributes to personal development. It has wide-ranging benefits for individuals, communities, and societies as a whole. Pashto is the native language of the Pashtun people and is primarily spoken in Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan. It holds significant cultural and historical importance in these regions. For multilingual individuals, knowing Pashto can provide professional opportunities and communication advantages. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and also widely spoken in parts of India. It has historical and literary significance, and it serves as a lingua franca among diverse linguistic communities in

South Asia. The importance of Urdu for multilingual individuals includes communication across regions, media and entertainment, media and education and professional opportunities. English is a global language and serves as a lingua franca in many parts of the world. Its importance for multilingual individuals includes international communication, education and career advancement, and global cultural exchange.

The Pashtuns, also known as the ethnic group Pashto-speaking people, have a multilingual background influenced by their historical and geographical context. Pashto is the native language of the Pashtuns and serves as their primary means of communication. However, due to their location and historical interactions, many Pashtuns are also fluent in other languages. Here are some languages that have had an impact on the multilingual background of Pashtuns: Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and is widely spoken and understood throughout the country. Many Pashtuns residing in Pakistan, particularly in urban areas, are bilingual in Pashto and Urdu. English is an important language for many Pashtuns, especially those who have had access to education and have interacted with the global community. English proficiency is common among urban Pashtuns, particularly in major cities and among the educated elite. The Pashtun students, who belong to the Pashtun ethnic group, primarily reside in the Pashtun-dominated regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Their multilingual educational background can vary depending on the specific region and the educational system they are enrolled in. Here are some key aspects of their educational background: Pashtun students typically have a strong foundation in Pashto, and it plays a significant role in their daily lives, including their educational pursuits. In Pakistan, where Pashtuns are a significant ethnic group, Pashtun students are often exposed to Urdu. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and is widely used in educational institutions, government offices, and media throughout the country.

Pashtun students may learn Urdu alongside their native Pashto, enabling them to communicate with people from different regions and ethnicities within Pakistan. English is taught as a foreign language in many educational institutions in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pashtun students often study English as part of their curriculum, particularly in higher-level education. Proficiency in English is highly valued as it opens up opportunities for higher education, employment, and international communication. English-medium schools and language centers are also available in some areas, providing additional resources for learning English. It's important to note that the multilingual educational background of Pashtun students can vary significantly based on their individual circumstances, access to educational resources, and the specific region in which they reside.

Focus Group Interview I:

Interviewer: Thank you all for participating in this focus group interview. Today, we will be discussing the role of multilingualism in the academic performances of Pashtun

MS English students at COMSATS University Islamabad. Let's begin by sharing your thoughts on how multilingualism has influenced your academic journey. Who would like to start?

Participant 1: I can begin. For me, multilingualism has been a blessing in my academic pursuits. Being fluent in Pashto, Urdu, and English has expanded my knowledge base and improved my understanding of various subjects. It has allowed me to access a wider range of resources and materials, enabling me to excel in my studies.

Participant 2: I completely agree. Multilingualism has definitely played a significant role in my academic performance. Knowing Pashto, Urdu, and English has given me an advantage in comprehending complex concepts. I can gather information from different sources, including research papers, books, and online content, in multiple languages. This has helped me develop a deeper understanding of my subjects and perform better in exams.

Participant 3: I would like to add that multilingualism has enhanced my communication skills, which have been crucial in my academic journey. Being able to switch between languages and use appropriate grammar strategies has made me a more effective communicator. It has also helped me engage with professors and classmates from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Interviewer: That's fascinating. It seems like multilingualism not only aids in understanding academic content but also contributes to better communication skills. Could you elaborate on how multilingualism has improved your grammar strategies?

Participant 4: Certainly. Growing up speaking Pashto, Urdu, and English from a young age has made grammar strategies and language use easier for me. I have become adept at code-switching and code-mixing between these languages, which has honed my interlingual skills. As a result, my grammar skills in all three languages have significantly improved, allowing me to express myself more accurately and effectively.

Participant 2: I can relate to that. I believe that multilingualism provides us with a broader perspective on language structures and grammar rules. By constantly using Pashto, Urdu, and English in different contexts, we develop a strong grasp of grammar strategies across languages. This, in turn, positively impacts our academic writing and oral communication skills.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing your experiences regarding grammar strategies. Now, let's talk about the impact of multilingualism on your academic achievements.

Have you noticed any correlation between your multilingual background and your academic performance?

Participant 1: Definitely. Before joining this focus group, the researcher looked into our previous academic results and found that many of us were among the higher achievers in our class. I believe that multilingualism has contributed to our success. It has not only improved our communication skills and comprehension but also helped us excel in different subjects.

Participant 3: I completely agree. Multilingualism has given me an edge in understanding complex academic texts, especially when studying English literature. It has enhanced my critical thinking skills and allowed me to analyze texts from different linguistic perspectives. I believe this has been instrumental in achieving good grades.

Participant 4: I would like to add that multilingualism has also positively influenced my overall academic experience. It has made me more open-minded and culturally aware. By engaging with different languages, I have gained a deeper appreciation for diversity and different ways of thinking. This has enriched my learning journey and made me more motivated to succeed academically.

Interviewer: Thank you all for sharing your valuable insights. It's evident that multilingualism has had a significant impact on your academic performances, enhancing your comprehension, communication skills, grammar strategies, and overall motivation. After the significant analysis of data, the research shows that multilingualism has proved beneficial for Pashtun MS English students at COMSATS University Islamabad. The data taken from the focus group interviews show that multilingualism plays a vital role in complete and comprehensive understanding of knowledge. Moreover, it helps to enhance Pashtun intellect and knowledge. According to a participant "in my case, I would say that multilingualism is a blessing for me at this level because my knowledge in Pashto, Urdu, and English gets enhanced at the same time." The analysis of collected data also revealed that multilingualism gives Pashtun speakers freedom and privacy in a particular discourse. Even if they speak openly, they can still maintain their privacy in a multilingual communication because the non-Pashto speakers do not understand their words uttered in Pashto. A participant quoted that "Multilingualism is a blessing for Pashtuns because there are no language barriers and the Pashtuns can understand Urdu, Pashto, and English. Therefore, Pashto have more power, freedom, and privacy in any multilingual discourse and conversation." Multilingualism gives Pashtuns power in a discourse over all non-Pashto speakers. Other non-Pashto speakers, for instance Urdu speakers, cannot hide their privacy in discourse since the Pashtuns do understand their language. A participant added that "I gather different information in all three languages, Urdu,

Pashto, and English, that gives me power in a discourse over non-Pashto speakers.” Multilingualism helps Pashtuns become skilled communicators with good grammar strategies. Multilinguals have better grammar strategies and comprehension than bilinguals. A participant from the focus group quoted that “being fluent in three important languages makes grammar strategies and use easier for me. We have been practicing Pashto, Urdu, and English since birth. Therefore, we have mastered interlingual skills like code-switching and code-mixing and that is why we have better communication skills and grammar strategies.”

Focus Group Interview 2:

Interviewer: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for participating in this focus group interview. Today, we will be discussing the role of multilingualism in enhancing the academic performances of Pashtun MS English students at COMSATS University Islamabad. Your insights and experiences are valuable to our study. Let's begin with a brief introduction. Could each of you please introduce yourselves and share your thoughts on the impact of multilingualism on academic performance?

Participant 1: Sure, I'll start. My name is Ali and I'm a Pashtun MS English student at COMSATS University. In my opinion, multilingualism plays a significant role in improving academic performance. Personally, being fluent in multiple languages helps me understand English texts better and communicate my ideas effectively. It also gives me an edge in language-related courses.

Participant 2: Hi, I'm Aisha. I completely agree with Ali. Multilingualism has been beneficial for me too. I believe it enhances our comprehension skills. When we can understand and speak multiple languages, we can analyze texts from different perspectives and draw connections between different subjects. This broader understanding positively affects our academic performance.

Participant 3: Hello, my name is Imran. Multilingualism has helped me immensely in developing grammar strategies. Since different languages have their own grammar rules, learning multiple languages has made me more aware of the intricacies of English grammar. This knowledge has definitely contributed to my success in English language courses.

Participant 4: Hi, I'm Fatima. For me, multilingualism has improved my speaking fluency. When you can confidently switch between languages, you gain more confidence in expressing yourself. This has helped me in presentations, group discussions, and even during exams where oral communication is required. I feel it has definitely impacted my academic performance positively.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing your perspectives. It's great to hear how multilingualism has had a positive impact on your academic journeys. Now, I'd like to ask if any of you have specific examples or experiences that highlight how multilingualism has directly contributed to your academic success?

Participant 1: Yes, I have an example. In one of my literature courses, we were studying a poem originally written in Pashto, my native language. Since I am fluent in both English and Pashto, I could appreciate the cultural nuances and wordplay in the poem that some of my classmates couldn't. This helped me analyze the poem more deeply and write a well-received essay.

Participant 2: I can share an experience too. During a research project, I had to study articles written in different languages related to my topic. Knowing multiple languages allowed me to access a wider range of resources, which strengthened my arguments and improved the overall quality of my research.

Participant 3: I remember a situation where my knowledge of Urdu, Pashto, and English greatly helped me understand complex academic concepts. We were discussing a challenging concept in a class, and the professor was struggling to explain it in English. I was able to translate and explain the concept using both English and Urdu terminology, which not only helped my classmates but also showcased my understanding of the topic.

Participant 4: Something that comes to mind is when I had to present a group project in a conference. We were assigned a diverse group, and everyone had a different first language. Since I was comfortable with multiple languages, I was able to effectively communicate with my group members and coordinate our efforts. This contributed to a well-organized presentation, and we received positive feedback from the audience.

Interviewer: These are excellent examples that illustrate how multilingualism has positively influenced your academic performances. Based on your experiences and the discussions we've had today, it seems evident that multilingualism plays a vital role. The analysis of data reflected that multilingualism also enhances the academic performances of Pashtun MS English students at COMSATS University Islamabad. Before the focus group interviews, the researcher investigated the previous academic results of the participants of the study and found that six out of eight participants were among the higher achievers of the class. This fact was investigated during the focus group interview. The collective response was that most of the participants were of the view that multilingualism has a key role in achieving good grades. Moreover, the participants also added that multilingualism helps in increasing their communications skills, comprehension and understanding, grammar strategies and speaking

fluency in different languages. Therefore, it is concluded that multilingualism enhances the academic performances of the Pashtun MS English students at COMSATS University Islamabad in various ways and at different levels.

Findings

1. Multilingualism is a resource for Pashtun MS English students at CUI because of the importance of three important languages, English, Urdu, and Pashto.
2. Multilingualism is a resource for Pashtun MS English students at CUI because they have a multilingual educational background.
3. Multilingualism enhances the understanding and comprehension of knowledge of Pashtun MS English students at CUI.
4. Multilingualism gives Pashtun speakers freedom, power, and privacy in a particular contextual discourse.
5. Multilingualism helps Pashtun speakers become skilled communicators with good grammar strategies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis aimed to investigate the role of multilingualism as a resource for Pashtun Master of Science (MS) English students at COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI) in Pakistan. The study recognized the inherent multilingualism of Pashtun students due to their diverse linguistic backgrounds and explored the impact of this multilingualism on their academic performance and educational journey. Through a qualitative research design, the study gathered insights and perspectives from MS English students belonging to the Pashtun community. Convenience sampling was utilized to select a sample of eight participants, who were divided into two focused groups. Focus group interviews were conducted and audio recorded to ensure accurate data capture. The data analysis process involved content analysis and thematic analysis. Content analysis facilitated a systematic examination and interpretation of the data, while thematic analysis identified underlying patterns and themes. The combined use of these methods ensured a robust and comprehensive analysis of the data, maintaining transparency, consistency, and reliability throughout the process. The findings of this study shed light on the unique experiences of Pashtun MS English students at CUI and highlighted the value of multilingualism as a resource for their academic journey. The study revealed several significant aspects: First, multilingualism was found to have a positive impact on the academic performance of Pashtun MS English students. The ability to comprehend and communicate in multiple languages, including English, Urdu, and Pashto, provided them with a diverse linguistic skillset. This enhanced their understanding and comprehension of knowledge, enabling them to engage with the subject matter more effectively.

Second, the study demonstrated that multilingualism served as a valuable resource for Pashtun MS English students at CUI, considering their multilingual educational background. The exposure to different languages from a young age contributed to their language learning strategies and overall linguistic competence. It gave them a sense of freedom, power, and privacy in specific discourses, allowing for skilled communication and the use of effective grammar strategies.

Third, multilingualism was found to play a significant role in the development of cultural identity among Pashtun MS English students. Their multilingual background influenced their cultural perspectives and attitudes towards language use, enriching their understanding of diverse cultures and fostering a sense of multiculturalism. Furthermore, the study suggested conducting a comparative analysis between Pashtun MS English students with a multilingual educational background and those without. Such a study could provide insights into the specific advantages of a multilingual background, including language learning strategies, academic performance, and overall linguistic competence.

Finally, the study emphasized exploring the impact of multilingualism on professional and career opportunities for Pashtun MS English students. Their language skills and multicultural experiences were identified as significant contributors to their employability and success in the job market.

To sum up, this research contributes to the existing literature on multilingualism and education by providing insights into the experiences of Pashtun MS English students at CUI. The findings emphasize the importance of multilingualism as a resource and highlight the need for educational institutions, policymakers, and educators to create supportive environments that leverage the linguistic diversity of students. By recognizing and harnessing the potential of multilingualism, educational outcomes can be enhanced, and individuals can be better equipped for success in an increasingly interconnected and multicultural world.

Recommendations

1. Investigate the specific ways in which each language (English, Urdu, and Pashto) contributes to the academic success of Pashtun MS English students at CUI. This can help provide a deeper understanding of the unique benefits of each language and how they can be utilized effectively in the learning process.
2. Explore the role of multilingualism in the development of cultural identity among Pashtun MS English students. Investigate how their multilingual background influences their cultural perspectives and attitudes towards language use.

3. Conduct a comparative study between Pashtun MS English students who have a multilingual educational background and those who do not. Compare their language learning strategies, academic performance, and overall linguistic competence to understand the specific advantages of a multilingual background.
4. Investigate the impact of multilingualism on the professional and career opportunities available to Pashtun MS English students. Examine how their language skills and multicultural experiences contribute to their employability and success in the job market.
5. Explore the challenges and barriers faced by Pashtun MS English students in developing proficiency in multiple languages. Identify specific strategies and interventions that can help overcome these challenges and optimize the benefits of multilingualism.
6. Investigate the impact of multilingualism on the cognitive abilities and academic achievements of Pashtun MS English students. Examine whether multilingual individuals have cognitive advantages, such as enhanced problem-solving skills, creativity, and critical thinking abilities.
7. Conduct a longitudinal study to track the language development and academic progress of Pashtun MS English students over an extended period. This can provide insights into the long-term effects of multilingualism on their academic success and overall linguistic growth.

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