



RESEARCH PAPER**An Investigation of Pakistani English Speakers' Perception about the relationship between Accent and Identity in English as a Lingua Franca Communication**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this qualitative inquiry is to investigate the relationship between accent and identity in English as lingua franca (ELF) communication from the perspective of second language (L2) speakers/ learners of English. Learners' view point and overall orientation towards the learning process impacts the learners' overall performance. Being a qualitative inquiry this research could not cover a large number of learners in its span. Ten English Students/ learners' data about ELF communication experience was collected by semi- structured interviews at Karachi, Pakistan. The figures revealed a mix perception about the choice of accent in the participants: approximately 55% of the participants went for their natural accent, while about 45% of the participants chose British or American accents. This research is a small contribution to the little investigated relationship of accent and identity in ELF communication. It is recommended by the researchers that there is a need of conducting some quantitative studies seeking learners' perceptions about language learning, which would cover divers and a large number of learns.

KEYWORDS Accent, Identity, Lingua Franca Communication (ELF)

Introduction

This study is conducted to know the perception of Pakistani English speakers about the relationship between accent and identity in English as a lingua franca communication. Pakistan is the country of multiple languages, where English is the language of education, administration, business and establishment and also enjoys the status of official language (Zaidi & Zaki, 2017).

English as a lingua franca has become the most widespread current use of English (Jenkins, 2014, p. 2). Seidlhofer (2011) defines ELF as a language of communication by the speakers with different mother tongues and for whom English language is the mean of communication of choice and mostly the single option (p. 7). The emerging role of ELF in the field of English language teaching (ELT), confronts the basic conjectures of ELT, is asking us to review our teaching norms and practices (Matsuda & Friedrich, 2012, p. 17).

Because of its widespread use English has become the language of the "others" and it is most likely that English will have to surrender or share its position as world principal language with at least one or more languages of these "others" (Jenkins, 2014, p.52). Widdowson (1997) believes that English has spread in the world as virtual language, which implies that English language has been widely adapted. Besides other changes this adaptation led to the development of different accents in English language. Language

changes with time. It is adjusted according to the new needs of the speakers. If languages were not allowed to change we could not have different dialects of any language.

According to Jenkins (2007) research related to English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is gaining too much emphasis in the domain of applied linguistics in the current years. Since, English is now a global language that is why it is being used by the people of different cultural backgrounds for communication. It is also very clear that today in the globalized world the non-native speakers of English are much higher in number than native ones. Most of the ELF communication is taking place among the second language speakers themselves, devoid of any involvement by the native speakers. Sung (2007) believes that in the last years or so the issue of "identity" has been the focus of ELF research. Many researchers believe that in the prevailing trend of globalization, many second language learners and speakers of English in the world want a global identity with taking part in ELF communication. One more focused issue in the research of ELF is "accent". According to Walker (2010) the option of accent engages phonological, psychological, sociological and political issues. Accent is of course related to one's identity. The accent they chose the way they are identified in the ELF communication.

Pennington and Richards (1986) believe that accent openly reflects people's identity. It is people's choice to talk in their regional accents and reveal their identity or to follow the accent of the native speaker for whatever reasons. The investigation of the reasons behind these choices can lead to the improvement of English language teaching. In the light of modern emphasis on understanding rather on native-like accent in English language teaching (ELT) (see Jenkins, 2000; Walker, 2010), it would be very important to see whether accent is important to second language speaker and learner of English language and what is the role of identity in their preferences and choice in ELF communication.

In the era of globalization, it is almost mandatory for the students of any discipline to have confidence in personal and professional communication. Shabani (2013) and Bailey and Savage (1994) believe that there is more demand of speaking compared to the other language skills. According to Brown (1994) and Burns and Joyce (1997) while speaking the speaker is involved in an interactive process, consists of production and receipt.

According to Jenkin (2007) today speakers and learners of L2 should try to make themselves intelligible for a vast majority of lingual Franca users. It cannot be declared sensible to employ all your energy on native like accent. Today students should focus on how they will be intelligible internationally.

In the light of the new emerging thinking of focus on intelligibility rather than get command over native like accent, it would be very important to see the importance of accent for second language speakers and learners of English, and to see the role of identity for them while choosing and accent in the English as Lingua franca communication. This qualitative inquiry will investigate form the perspective of second language speakers and learners of English, the relationship of accent and identity in ELF communication.

Literature Review

According to Jenkins (2014) accent has been one of the important area in the field of second or foreign language learning. Despite of large number of researches about the accent of late language learners' accent acquisition clashing findings still appear related to how it influence communication in global arena. According to Seidlhofer (2011)

communication collapse is most probable when non-native emphasise more on segmental cues and neglecting other important parts.

According to Joseph (2004) because of the importance of ELF in today's world, growing interest is being seen in the role of identity in ELF communication. According to Pavlenko & Blackledge (2004) identity explains the relationship of a person with a broader social and cultural world. According to Norton (1997) identity is recognise their relations with the world, how that relations is built and how people recognise their possibilities for tomorrow (p. 48).

According to Walker (2010) the most right away concrete traits of a specific variety in any spoken language. Moyer (2013) term them Influential indicators of one's identity. According to Smit & Dalton (2000) accent makes a person recognised as a member of a particular community. Lippi-Green (1997) believes that the accent can be the reason of a speaker's evaluation on the basis of things related to the accent and all its labels. So accent has a lot to do with ELF communication. According to Jenkins (2007) accents are more important to ELF communication than the communication among the native speakers. Because in the globalised ELF communication the interlocutors' speech are to a high level influenced by their L1.

In the past ELF was considered identity free form in communication (House, 2003). But according to Baker (2011) a large body of research proves that identity is relevant for ELF communication just like for any other communication.

To identify the importance of ELF there is growing interest in understanding the key role of ELF communication, the relationship between language and identity (Joseph, 2004) describes the connection between the social cultures. And the individual .English has great power as international language and the unknown input in our daily lives. Some scholars are keen to blame English as killer language.

Jenkins (2007) defined that how belief and attitude towards ELF could impact on the identity on those whose are non-native speakers. Norton(1997) said that identity refers to how people may recognize their possibilities for the future, he further describes that there is link between notion of understanding and nature of L2 learners identity .There can be relationship between learners target language and there social and historical practice. Norton (2000) indicate that if those whose are considered as L2 invest in desired language, they sometimes will have good response on their investment, that may include of accessing to previously resources .

Bourdieu (1991) explained that the investment of target language which is having a particular accent could be found as investment in their identity such experiences are the relationship between language and identities. IN ELF communication accent is important issue that needs to be defined in systematic way as Jenkins (2007) expressed that accents are highly essential to ELF speakers, even in native speakers of English in the term of Globalization and the use of English as ELF, language variation including phonological variation is a fact. Different lingual cultural background speakers are probably to communicate with each other in large scale of L1 and L2 accents. These accents are observed in L2 speakers to allow them to express their identification. Jenkins (2000) expressed that those whose language are L2 or learners of English should be allowed them to pronounce it in their l1 accent influenced of native speaker's pronunciation.

In this regard Mennen and silk(2000) indicate that substantial findings to the target language that should be highly motivated intensive training on phonological variation

that makes it possible post critical period where learners can achieve a native like accent. Majority of English speakers face that in their institutions accent is considered as common issue in their daily base discussion and some of them are keen to taking interest, how to improve or change their on accents. Medgyes (1992) expressed that non-native speakers can never accomplish that native speakers have, the meaning of that there would distinguish between the two groups is still remaining, but he showed his demonstration against the idea that native speakers in somehow better than non-native speakers, which was caused that Superiority in pedagogical advantages. Many research studies have indicated that non-native speakers of English having feelings that they are different from native speakers and they want to be like them. Communication is linking between two or more people if, they are in same room then it is accepted everywhere, but if not then the whole environment should be changed such as phonology, semantic, syntax and vocabulary.

Theoretical Positioning of Identity

Identity is reflected by changing in social contexts that resulted from the wide range of English language varieties across the world. As researchers think that the variations of English impacted on the identification, and it is one of the significant worries by in the area of English teaching/education (Li, 2009; McKay, 2002; Park, 2011; Park, 2012). This study conditions itself within the poststructuralist take on identity, and realizes identity cannot be as a firm entity but as an unsolidified that is constantly influenced by several social factors around the representative. One rephrasing which most scholars seem to agree on is that it is our sense yet its needs to be clarified more for the sake of further examination on how we may recognize the nature and its purpose. When this observation the preceding theorizations and the characterizations of identity, two essential elements for identity construction emerge specific contact with other individuals, and his/her aspiration for acknowledgment. One of the basic concepts on which many investigators have approved is that interaction cannot be ignored when considering identity construction.

Richards (2006) said that identity is “something that is formed and shaped through action” (p. 3). Wardhaugh (2010) added his explanation that it is also “demonstrated through performance and action” (p. 7). These descriptions understood that through representing that we are performing upon it in interactions, actually we build our identities. Identity construction was also perceived in other experiential studies. For example, Jones (2001) finds out those British English speakers who are considered as native in America providing accommodations themselves to more influential social group out of need to be socially accepted.

Social theories of Identity construction in relation to language

Studies of identity that concentrated on social characteristics of identity construction arisen from the anthropology that focused on language in social elements which build people’s identities, and the field is established as linguistic anthropology. These studies focused on changes in accent and identities, such as ethnic identity, gender identity (Hall & Bucholtz, 1995) and gang identity. Hall (2005) suggested five principles while analysing identities as a creation through linguistic interaction. First, he proposed that identity is arose from the particular condition of the linguistic discourse. He described that identity is not a pre-existing cause that linguistic interactions are built upon, but it is an emergent product of linguistic interaction (p. 588)

Language Accent and Identity

Accent is considered as one of the important linguistic features that effect on speaker' identities. Jenkins (2007) described that the judgments about accents consist of the speakers' group membership choices and the tension between their peculiar identities and group identities (p.231). Gluszek and Dovidio (2010b) also described that "An accent constitutes an important part of a speaker's social identity and conveys a considerable amount of social information" (p. 215). The explanations showed the close relationship between speakers' social identities and language accents. Derwing's (2003) study confirmed that how L2 speakers observe their own accents and make their identities when they were not having full contact to the out-group accents, which they wanted to prefer. She further conducted a study with low to high intermediate ESL learners in Canada. She stated that the members of group who were participants had negative impressions on their L2 English accents because they considered that their accents slowed down their interaction and caused some problems. Some participants also felt they were socially discriminated because of their accents. As a connecting point of their accents to their identity, in her demonstration many of the participants had not evinced an interest in holding their particular accents as symbols of their identities. The participants who are in that study explained that they were feeling their identities were bounded to their native language and they could not express like a native accent. She distinguished the participants using their L1s in their families and their own indigenous communities. The outcome of Derwing's study indicates that when L2 learners have recognized a positive level of identity with their L1s, they do not comfort the urgent use to emphasize the identities through their L2 accents.

Hooper (1994) investigated that in Britain regional English accents caused a negative influence on speakers' social, academic and economic status, they also having a function to preserve speakers' solidarity in that specific community. There is distinction between Derwing's study, and Hooper. Hooper finds out that many speakers selected regional accents to retain their social link, even they misplaced there higher social position by doing so. These studies demonstrated that the observations of accents and the speakers' varieties of accents were influenced by both the power-concerned with relationship between Local accents and so called "standard accent," and their social identities in the community where their accents were common. The result of this study carried an interesting divergence with Derwing's study. It showed that the local accent speakers chose to speak with their own accent to reserve solidarity, not with the socially desired "standard accent" to increase their social status. In other words, they chose to remain in the established identity within the local community, and did not desire to acquire another identity through speaking the other accent.

Rising awareness in research of the ELF speakers' identity has been noticeable in the recent years. Few studies have been piloted to observe such speakers' identity relationship with their accent looked at non-native English speaker's identity. Interviews with 17 teachers of different nationalities were carried out and were found that these teachers had diverse feelings in terms of belonging to an international ELF community, with particularly different attitudes towards constructing L1 identity in English. They anticipated a native-speaker identity shown through a native-like accent, but at the same time they were strongly attached to their mother tongue. In detail, they wanted a native-like English identity as signaled by a native-like accent. They recognized a native-like English accent as a critical contribution to their competence and hence professional success.

Jenkins also interestingly noted that a majority of non-native EFL teachers may be affected by the existing standard native speaker of English ideology. The second study (Li,

2009), examined the concepts of identity among bilingual speakers of English and Chinese in Hong Kong. 107 questionnaires and 1 focus group showed result that about 80% of the participants had a partiality towards speaking English with a native-like accent, while the rest were maintaining their native accent when speaking English. Some speakers, who expressed Chinese identity and speak English at the same time found themselves in a difficulty. Yet, this study ignored to look at the choice of using a native-like accent and absorbed mainly on identity with relation to the local accent.

A study discovered that over 200 natively-accented and non-natively-accented English speakers' sense belonging to the USA. Quantitative analysis exposed that non-native-like accent is strongly related to a weaker sense of belonging to the culture. This study replicated on two diverse viewpoints when it comes to accent and speaker's identity linkage, namely accent with negative implications of finding and judged accent as a positive feature. Both types were reported to have made a difference in the analysis of speakers' identity. Another study showed how L2 speakers see their accents and establish identities when they are not having access to the ideal accent. This study focused on ESL learners in Canada and exposed that some participants felt socially distinguished due to their non-native-like accents. Many of them also did not establish any interest in keeping their own accents. Maximum participants demanded their identities were knotted strongly to their first language. The findings revealed that native accent will not be endangering them. L2 learners' identity is firmly recognized with their L1, they do not see the need to emphasize their identity through their L2.

Some philosophers recommend a relation between accent and identity; some have been concerned about the ethical problems of L2 pronunciation teaching. However, English as Second Language (ESL) students normally wish to speak like native speakers. ESL students' perceptions between their accents and identities, whether students fear loss of identity from L2-pronunciation learning, it is challenging to recognize how these links affect language learning goals.

Another study was conducted in which mixed-methods technique was adopted. Sample size was 78 participants, who were the university students. A survey of 23 Likert-scale questionnaires and a semi-structured interview by some participants was conducted. Results indicated that students wanted native accent. Moreover, students were not differentiated by any fear of loss of identity. Ethnic identity mentions the subjective experience accepting the feelings and behaviours through which people position their membership in ethnic groups. Existence of some variations in how ELF is defined by scholars, it seems to be an agreement amongst most scholars that ELF refers to conditions, where language works as a contact language used amongst those people who do not share a common native language (Jenkins 2013; Seidlhofer 2011). ELF is also exercised as a lingua franca by the non-native English speakers. ELF relations never eliminated L1 speakers of English ever; most collaboration takes place amongst second language (L2) speakers. As is now commonly recognized among ELF students, ELF never discussed a static variety of English. It cannot be directly defined in terms of its formal features. ELF is chiefly concerned with use of English language amongst speakers of different L1 backgrounds.

Seidlhofer (2011) examined that ELF is functionally not a variety of English but a variable way of using it. He conceptualized it as a dynamic and fluid kind of language. He further explained that ELF is "concerned more with communicative practices and interactive processes" than of formal language.

From the sociocultural perspective, identity is the thing which is not seen as a fixed attribute of individuals. Sociocultural investigators stress techniques in which people

narrate dialectically to the “various worlds and experiences they inhabit and which act on them” (Ricento 2005: 895). Identity is intellectualized as non-unitary, manifold, fluid, and opposing (Duff 2012; Norton 2000, Norton 2010). According to Norton (2000), identity building is competition which desire agreement with reference broader communal procedures.

In recent few years, rising of globalization made linguistic characteristics more complex. Common movement of people and ideas across international boundaries, the contact amongst speakers of different lingua-cultural backgrounds strengthened through ELF communication. As Baker (2011) notes, ELF speakers often build individual and global identities in energetic and mixed ways. In addition, language alternation, or code-switching, has been found common in ELF communication. Speakers draw a group of memberships in numerous linguistic and cultural communities. In short, it could be asserted that ELF communication recommend a new space in which ELF speakers come to understand themselves, their identities, and their place in the world. There have been advances in our consideration of the phenomenon of ELF in recent years. Main research on ELF communication has been carried out in European contexts (for recent examples, see Kalocsai 2013; Motschenbacher 2013). Most remarkably, one of the chief development on ELF communication is the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE), which consist of more than one million words of ELF interactions. Experimental research in our Asian background is still in its infancy. With the growing presence of ELF in Asia (Bolton 2008; Kirkpatrick 2012), there is a critical need for more ELF research in the Asian context. Although some research on ELF in Hong Kong has been done in the field of business communication (Evans 2013), much more ELF research in Hong Kong is needed, especially in non-business contexts where ELF communication is common place.

As qualitative inquiry, this research investigated the perceptions of a group of English second language (L2) speakers/ learners in Karachi, Pakistan about their accent choice and desired identities in ELF communication. This study tried to seek the following research question:

How accent choice is related to one’s identity in ELF communication from the perspective of English second language (L2) speakers/ learners?

Material and Methods

Setting and Participants

This research analysed the data of English language speakers and learners’ perceptions of “identity” and “accent” in ELF communication. 10 participants were interviewed for this study in Karachi, Pakistan. Out of these ten participants nine are male and one is female. Most of them are teachers of English language. They all have had the experience of taking part in ELF communication within country and abroad. They all are graduate and aged between 20 to 40 years. All the participant are proficient English speakers (having advanced level proficiency) and have learnt English as second language from school to university level. Most of them received their education in Karachi, Pakistan.

Table 1
Demographic information of the participants

No of students	10
Age	Between 20 to 40
Sex	9 are male and 1female
Mother tongue	Urdu=5, Sindhi= 2, Pashto= 2 other= 1

Data collection

This study gathered data through semi-structured interview of ten participants. The interviews were aimed to elicit information about participants' experiences of ELF communication with the speakers of different countries like Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Canada and Ireland. Interviews were successful to make the participants share their perception openly. Participants were asked to share their experiences, including their self-perceptions, their accent choice and their desired identities. The interviews were conducted in English one to one and recorded by the permission of the interviewees. Each interview lasted for about 5 to 10 minutes.

Results and Discussion

The interviews data were transcribed and underwent thematic analysis. The interview transcripts were scanned and reviewed. It started with initial coding and then focused coding and grouping of the like codes into categories. Themes were extracted and defined later on. Particular attention was paid to identifying themes related to accent and identity as it was the purpose of our research to see the relationship of accent and identity. The researchers remained open for any other categories which would emerge from the analysis. The categories emerged from one participant were compared with those of other participants. The data was analysed until it reached to the saturated level.

Among the ten participants four participants preferred their natural accent in ELF communication. Means they don't follow any specific accent. While four participants preferred British or American accents for their ELF communication. As far as "identity" is concerned most of the participants showed commitment with their local identities. Now further we will discuss the themes extracted from participants' views about their choices of accents and identities. Here below we will provide interview transcripts to give a clear insight for the user of this researcher. Interviewees would be referred with their respective identity number to make sure their anonymity.

Natural Accent

About 55% of the participants went for their natural accent which means that they want to talk in their local indigenous accents which they have naturally developed. One of the participants explained it in the following way:

I don't want to portray myself as Britisher or an American. I don't want to pretend that I have been to American or UK. We are speaking English we are living in Pakistan. We should follow our natural accent. We should be proud of our national identity. Grammatical English should be correct. Message should be communicated, pronunciation should be correct. We should not mispronounce. Accent is not very necessary (# 2, male)

Preference of British or American accents

Approximately 45% of the participants chose British or American accents for their ELF communications. According to them these two are the world's most recognised accents of English language. One of the participants put it in the following way:

Whatever I have I speak in that way. I don't fabricate. I listen to different music of American and British so I try to speak the same way (#10, male).

Owning Self-identity

Most of the participants were committed to their local identities. They eliminated any chance of fabrication. One of the participants explained it in the following way:

I want to identify myself. I don't need to hide anything. I identify myself what I am. I have no problem of identification. I am very happy with my identity (# 4, male).

Importance of message and pronunciation in communication

Almost all of the participants were agreed on the importance of message and pronunciation. They believe that the basic purpose of communication is to convey the message and if it is done the purpose of communication is fulfilled. One of the participants discussed in the following way:

If the message is clear the purpose of communication is served. I go with my natural accent (# 6, male).

Some of the participants focused on the role of pronunciation. For them if one does not follow any particular accent but he or she must speak with correct pronunciation. One of the participants emphasised on the importance of pronunciation in the following way:

I try to pronounce the words as they are. I search in the dictionary. I check the correct pronunciation (# 9, female).

Conclusion

From the figures of the study it becomes very obvious that there is a mix perception about the choice of accent in the participants. About half of the participants chose their naturally developed indigenous accents while the other half declared to follow British or American accents. Pakistan, being an Ex-colony of Great Britain where English enjoys the status of official language, medium of instructions from school to university level, the language of high level competitive exams, one cannot underestimate the influence of British or American accents. But at the same time almost half of the participants were reluctant to show any favour for British, American or any other accent of inner circle countries. Their almost unanimous position to intact and secure their own identity, shows their strong feelings to adhere to the local indigenous accent of English. The research findings could not report any deterministic relationship between accent and identity in ELF communication based on the perceptions of L2 speakers/learners of English. This research is a little contribution to the little investigated relationship of accent and identity in EFL communication. Further researchers are needed to have a further diverse input from different parts of Pakistan.

Recommendations

It is recommended by the researchers that there is a need of conducting some quantitative studies seeking learners' perspective about accent and identity, which would cover divers and a large number of learners. A quantitative research in this regard could cover up a large sample of participants from different parts of Pakistan, which would ultimately offer more authentic and credible idea about students'/ learners' perspective about accent and identity in English as lingua franca (ELF) communication

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