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Students' behaviour Towards Learning English as a Foreign Language: Analysis at University Level

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Abstract

The purpose of this quantitative survey research was to look at how university students in Pakistan felt about their English classes. In addition, the study examined how different demographic factors influenced students' perceptions. Researchers surveyed university students on their attitudes and actions related to English language acquisition in order to accomplish these goals. The demographics portion of the survey and the behaviour scale for evaluating EFL students were the two main parts of the questionnaire. A total of 22 items over three subscales—emotional, cognitive, and behavioural—make up this questionnaire, which was initially created by Viet (2017). There were nine statements on the emotional behaviour subscale of the questionnaire. There were nine statements on the second subscale, which prompted students to reflect on their own cognitive behaviour. The third and last subscale of the survey asked students to rate their own attitudes and actions in relation to EFL instruction using four statements. Researchers used a stratified sampling technique to gather information from 200 university students, 100 of whom were male and 100 of whom were female, attending public and private universities. Pearson's R correlations were used to

examine the collected data. It was found that overall behaviour (OA) was positively correlated with emotional behaviour (EA), cognitive behaviour (CA), and behavioural behaviour (BA). This indicates that students who report a more positive overall behaviour towards learning English also tend to score higher on the subscales measuring emotional, cognitive, and behavioural aspects of this behaviour.

Keywords: Learning English, Foreign Language, Cognitive Behavior towards L2, Emotional Behavior towards L2, Behavioral Behavior towards L2.

Introduction

Because it allows us to convey thoughts and ideas to one another, language is fundamental to the creative process. People use language to tell each other what they desire, how they feel, and what they need from the world (Fishman, 2020). You must first be fluent in the language of your own culture in order to communicate with other people. Learning a second language, in addition to one's native tongue, allows people from all walks of life to broaden their perspectives and develop more tolerance.

Second language instruction at the primary school level has a long history in many countries. Nonetheless, this method first emerged in the US in the early 60s in response to the growing consensus that people needed to broaden their linguistic horizons outside their own culture. Despite its moniker as a "global language" in recent years, English continues to play a vital role in emerging countries. As per Kramsch and Zhu (2020), the English language has served several purposes in society's advancement. These include enhancing employability, which in turn increases the number of people able to go abroad for reasons like study, work, or travel; serving as a neutral language during times of conflict; and aiding in disaster relief and preparation. There is a strong correlation between students' mindsets on language learning and their actions and outcomes (Sun & Gao, 2020).

A literature review found that people's behaviours about language acquisition are affected by a number of factors. In their study, Mercy (2023) looked at the factors that motivate Francophone ESL students; the researcher concluded that one's behaviour toward a group of people who speak a foreign or second language, whether excellent or negative, greatly affected their desire to acquire the language. When instructing students in the English language, it is essential to keep their needs in mind so that they can reach their full potential " (MdYunus et al., 2021).

A lot of teachers are curious, "How can I get my class to focus more on their homework? Students' out-of-the-ordinary actions show that the teacher's intentions are not the only factor affecting their actions in the classroom. Academics are captivated by the students' distinct learning styles, leading them to thoroughly investigate the presence of many factors that promote learning (Danchikov et al., 2021). There are three main parts to a "tripartite concept" behaviour: thoughts, actions, and feelings (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960).

Behaviours have a powerful effect on students' desire to study hard, which in turn can change their educational path. Regular reading and the practice of memorization of challenging words may have a more significant impact on students' behaviours than classroom activities and social interactions alone. Students of a foreign language sometimes find themselves in situations where they must engage with things they have never encountered before, forcing them to change their behaviour or approach to familiar things in order to succeed. There are significant differences between learning one's native language and learning a second language. A strong incentive for students to do well in school might be the abundance of extracurricular activities offered to them (Bovill, 2020).

Parents, friends, and acquaintances all have a role in shaping a person's outlook (Smyth, 2020). Smyth (2020) argues that when it comes to characterizing behaviours towards languages, the general behaviour theory is better. According to him, behaviour is a theoretical concept that describes human behaviour and what drives it. A person's correct frame of mind cannot be communicated via words or actions alone. What we call "language behaviours" are people's inclinations when it comes to how we rate languages and how we feel about speakers of other languages. The term "language behaviours" was defined as the sum of an individual's language preferences, their assessment of the desirability of acquiring a specific language, and their description of their own language use. Behaviours toward language may be examined from several disciplinary perspectives, including sociology, psychology, sociolinguistics, and society at large. To find out how individuals feel about language, you can use one of several different ways. Some instances of direct judgement include surveys or interviews, the social behaviour of language types, and patterns of speaker evaluation (Jabbarov, 2020).

Having a more optimistic outlook could increase one's engagement with the target language, which in turn could improve one's proficiency in that language. These behaviours and motives heavily influence success in learning a second language, says Gardner (2014). The behaviour is essentially the members of the targeted language group. Considering the learner's sentiments about the target cultural group and how they impact their language acquisition is an integral part of the integrated motivation. The student has practical goals in mind when they decide to acquire a second language, such as preparing for a future career or furthering their education. Domyei opines that the complexity of second language acquisition makes it a potentially challenging endeavour. A person's identity and the path to social composition are both shaped by their language, which also serves as a medium of communication (Fisher et al., 2020).

Everyone has to be able to communicate in English because it is the most spoken language in the world. Leaders in several countries are considering new policies on the teaching of English as a second language. However, these communities have felt the effects of these authorities' controversial educational practices. For a long time, English has been the de jure language of choice for both the curriculum and teaching of foreign languages in schools. Efforts are made by several nations to promote English education so that they can actively engage in global events. Therefore, it is inevitable that methods will be developed to teach culture and English in a balanced manner. This study examines the controversial subject of EFL textbook review from the perspective of students in order to gain a better understanding of how it impacts their views towards studying English as a foreign language (Wright, 2020).

What gives specific language learners an advantage over others? Individual variances explain variations in language acquisition. Specifically, the "aspects of enduring character traits that are believed to be universal yet on which people differ to a certain degree". Studying a second language is an integral part of a child's academic formation for specific students, while it is a natural progression for others toward bilingualism. In both cases, experts seem to agree that "affective elements such as behaviours influence language acquisition," which is good news for students because it fosters positive behaviour toward learning English. Students' behaviours appear to influence their academic success or failure, suggesting that behaviours play a significant role in language learning (Getie, 2020).

It is also believed that having a positive mindset makes learning a new language more accessible, whereas having a negative view makes it more difficult. Evidence from the real world can back up these theories. A large body of research suggests that behaviours encompass not just behaviour but also thoughts and feelings. The cognitive component of a

behaviour consists of one's beliefs or perceptions of the items or events related to the behaviour. A person's feelings and opinions about something are conveyed by the emotional component, which includes words like "likes" or "dislikes," "with" or "against." The behavioural component states that different behaviours often lead students to engage in specific learning behaviours. Behaviours toward language learning and the target language community have been the primary foci of second language acquisition research (Getie, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

Although English is a required language in Pakistan due to its status as an international language, our pupils consistently struggle with the concept of learning a new language. Finding out how universities feel about taking English as a second language was the driving force for this study. The study is lacking in that it should be double-checked at the secondary, higher secondary and intermediate levels. Not only will this study be valuable for scholars of the future, but it will also be helpful for policymakers, students, and educators.

Objectives of the Study

The following were the objectives of the study.

1. To analyze students' behaviour towards learning English as a foreign language at the university level.
2. To compare university students perceived behaviour towards learning English based on their demographic characteristics.
3. To suggest measures for the guidance of all the stakeholders.

Research Questions

The following were the research questions of the study.

1. Are there any differences in Students' perception of (emotional, Behavioral and Cognitive) behaviour towards learning English at the university level?
2. Is there any difference in the relationship between students' perceived behaviour, their age and CGPA towards learning English at the university level?

Significance of the Study

Research like this would be helpful for everyone, but especially those who are working on EFL curriculum and policy issues. At the classroom level, the research would help both students and instructors better understand how English as a foreign language is learned. For future researchers interested in exploring related questions, this study might serve as a foundation. Discovering attitude aspects involving behaviour, cognition, and emotions towards learning an external language, mainly English, was the specific goal of this study.

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine how students approach learning English as a second language. The research team employed a behaviour scale that measured 45 different language-related behaviours across three domains: behavioural, cognitive, and emotional. The measure included 30 items that addressed positive behaviours related to EFL learning and 15 items that addressed negative behaviours. Researchers utilized SPSS to enter all data and calculate the correlation. Finally, draw inferences based on the findings.

Population of the Study

All Universities in the Multan district that provide M.Phil. degrees in English, whether public or private, made up the study's population. District Multan was home to 47 educational institutions, including public and private ones supported by Higher Education Commission (HEC) links. Just 33 of the 47 HEC-affiliated colleges and universities were providing M.Phil. English degrees. Included in the group were students from the first through second semesters of the M.Phil. in English programme. Six hundred and ten graduates enrolled in M.Phil. degree programmes in English were the intended subjects.

Sample of the Study

Stratified random sampling was used to select the sample. For this study, 200 post-graduates (100 male and 100 female) from each of the two semesters of M.Phil. English were chosen as samples for the research. The minimal sample size was determined using the table developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

Development of the Research Tool

This study utilizes the standardized behaviour measure "Students Behaviours towards Learning the English Language" developed by Viet (2017). The 45-item scale measured linguistic behaviours from a behavioural, cognitive, and emotional perspective. Thirty items measuring favourable attitudes toward English and fifteen items measuring unfavourable ones made up the scale. From "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," a 5-point Likert scale was used to score the issues.

Reliability of the Tool

Twenty students from each semester served as pilot testers for the study questionnaire. All students that were pilot tested were removed from the population in accordance with the study regulation. Overall, the scale has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, with separate values of 0.88 for the behavioural component, 0.86 for the cognitive component, and 0.87 for the emotional component.

Review of Literature

The initial means of disseminating the English language were monetary and social mobility, both of which occurred during the British standard. According to accounts, people picked up the language either via personal interaction or through official schooling (King, 2008). There are usually a few options for learning English on the Indian subcontinent because there are not many English schools, universities, or local language instructors to teach the language. The situation worsened following autonomy due to the drastic reduction in interaction with native speakers and assets. Consequently, those who are fluent in English begin to receive preferential treatment in the classroom and other areas (Mehboob, 2007).

After the Indian subcontinent was split in two, Pakistan and India were formed. Several religious leaders were unhappy about English being declared the official language of Pakistan because they preferred to speak in their own language (Mahboob, 2009). In the early days of independence, when English remained the language of truth, the opposition to tight meetings was fruitless. Pakistan may use more local language resources for education and other purposes, but I neglected to consider the strong disapproval and resistance of authoritarian organizations. Furthermore, English cannot be replaced as the official language of the nation by any other impartial language. Finally, stringent assemblies initially failed to gain sufficient support across the country to pose a real threat, and their ferocious opposition would eventually come to an end.

The rigorous reforms gathered steam and steam until General Zia-ul-1977 Haq's military coup. His policies of Islamization, nationalism in the Urdu language, and decentralization of English have severely diminished the language's use as a medium of instruction and study. At first, many worried that his plan to spread English across Pakistan would jeopardize the country's reputation as an English-speaking powerhouse. When Zia (1978) first instituted the country's linguistic strategy, it mirrored his dislike of the English language. All schools now teaching in English should switch to Urdu, he said. The fact that this tactic has failed to have an impact on those prestigious English institutions run by influential families is shocking. Regardless, the commoners did not want this option withdrawn until 1987, nine years after it had been implemented, even though it had deprived the commoners' children the chance to study English.

Public and private organizations in Pakistan utilize English extensively; this is especially true at the national and international levels of administration, media, equity, business, and exploration (Khan et al., 2020). From the inaugural address given by Quaid Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the first leader representative of Pakistan, to the first protected show just before the country's independence, the undeniable influence of English on Pakistani culture can be traced back to those events (Mahboob, 2009). That was the turning point when English became the de jure language of business and government in Pakistan. Applicants for Pakistani government and corporate positions are now more often asked to speak English rather than Urdu.

A minimum level of competence in English is now required to be considered for employment in the public sector. Consequently, a high level of English proficiency is basically required for the most profitable positions in private education, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and businesses that pay the least that are permissible by law (Maleki et al., 2007). Consequently, parents and students are increasingly viewing English as a potent language with incredible job opportunities both at home and abroad (Oanh et al., 2023). English seems to have an uncontested status without rivalling other languages in the center of Pakistan's bewildering language map. English has long served as the de jure language of instruction in Pakistani universities.

It seems like a lot of Pakistanis have come to terms with the fact that knowing English is essential for a better and more illustrious career. Since Pakistan gained its independence, the English language has been a relatively stable part of the educational system there. Everyone in Pakistan, from the lowest to the highest level, speaks English fluently and picks it up fast. As far as anybody can tell, knowing native languages will not help them advance in their careers. The challenges of learning English, however, are unquestionably more daunting than many may imagine. English language instruction has been a part of Pakistani curricula ever since the nation's independence (Shamim, 2008). Undeveloped teachers, out-of-date course materials, and barren study rooms are the root causes of stress for the majority of English customers. They are able to remember what they learn in class and even translate between Urdu and English. In contrast, the inverse is also true; thus, understudies study English as a discipline rather than a language.

Interest in English schools seems to be on the rise in Pakistan as more and more English speakers and pupils seek better academic, expert, and social positions. The majority of parents believe that their children would be better prepared for the intense academic competition in the country if they attend an English-medium secondary school rather than a vernacular secondary or a college (Sawaie, 2004). As a result, the attraction has given rise to a wide range of English-language educational institutions and communities. You may be sure that this English medium will provide you with the necessary skills to succeed in various English-only job interviews. As mentioned earlier, these English-speaking educational cost habitats span from underdeveloped areas to affluent neighbourhoods across the nation. The majority of English-speaking neighbourhoods tend to cluster in middle- and lower-class areas.

There are three different English-language educational institutions in Pakistan: one is a private, elite institution; another is a public or publicly-funded school; and a third is an average, low-quality institution (Aly, 2007). In the 1960s, evangelicals were the ones who ran the first private, elite English schools. At schools like Burn Hall, St. Mary's, and Presentation Covent, they not only made English study easy, but they also used it in everyday life (Rahman, 2005). The city's finance managers, military, and influential political figures control the private, elite schools in Pakistan's capital. Some educational institutions, like the

City School System and the Beacon House System, are located in every major city across the nation and are operated in a chain fashion (refer to the chart below) (Rahman, 2020). Because they are costly and reserved for the wealthy, and they help you get ready for the primarily English British general and advanced level school exams.

Researchers frequently observe native English speakers still finding it somewhat challenging to communicate in English, even after reading for six to eight years (Rahman, 2002). Undergraduates in 20 state-funded schools in Lahore failed to meet proficiency standards in English comprehension and communication, according to a 1982 evaluation (Coleman, 2010). The biggest problem is that native English speakers rarely use it, both in and out of the classroom. Additionally, clients may not be able to communicate in English due to inexperienced or unqualified instructors, insufficient teaching methods, inappropriate course materials, and a lack of supervision (Rahman, 2005). Just as the teachers at the vernacular school did their best to explain things in the local language, so too did the students.

English has completely dominated Pakistan's official and political discourse, just as it has in every non-industrial nation on Earth (Shamim, 2011). Students and parents in Pakistan acknowledge that proficiency in English is strongly linked to success in both academics and the workplace. Expanding the reach of English language education in Pakistan, Shamim's "Instruction for All" puts the country's most intractable problem—the gap between the country's affluent and poor—at the forefront of national discourse. The English language has the potential to be the key that unlocks public advancement and the path to progress. Since 1947, English has become the dominant language in the country, and several plans have been made to teach English.

Regardless, English was designated as the official language of Pakistan during the first fifteen years of its existence in the 1973 constitution. Urdu, which has been and is now the official language of the country, took its place. The following are the English provisions of Pakistan's constitution from 1973:

1. Within a long period from the date of beginning, Urdu will be used as the public language and plan for official and other reasons.
2. In accordance with Article (1), English can be used for correct reasons until Urdu is planned to replace it.

Urdu was supposed to supersede English as the official language of Pakistan within fifteen years, according to the constitution, but that has never materialised. Because of this, the power and influence of the English language among

Finally, when all the competing approaches to English were exhausted, the Benazir administration (1988–1990) declared English a mandatory subject and included it in the primary curriculum. At first, the government took this as a good sign, as English has become the de facto guiding language in private schools. Despite the government's best efforts, this attempt to maintain the general education framework's balance will fail to provide desirable results due to underqualified teachers and the precarious financial situation of publicly supported institutions (Mahboob, 2002).

A reflection of Pakistan's economic foundation may be seen in the language, claims Rahman (2002). There is a social stratification between the English-speaking middle class and the Urdu-speaking lower class.

It is acknowledged by Javed (2017) that etymologists, second language analysers, English educators, and teachers of English as a second language should draw on applied phonetics to enhance the teaching conditions of English in Pakistani provincial regions—additionally, city weather. The English language situation in Pakistan is far from ideal, according to Javed (2017), as students still struggle to communicate well in English even after six or eight years

of study. Reading, writing, listening, and speaking seem to be four elemental language talents that the majority of students, especially those from rural areas, lack. In Pakistan, English education has been impacted by issues such as inadequate course information, a lack of teacher engagement, unsuitable reading material, and an absence of training resources.

Data Analysis

The overall relationship between students' perceived behaviour, their age and CGPA

Variable	OA	SA	CGPA	EA	CA	BA
Overall behaviour (OA)	1					
Student Age (SA)	.001	1				
CGPA	-.036	-.090	1			
Emotional behaviour (EA)	.844**	.022	-.056	1		
Cognitive behaviour (CA)	.892**	-.035	-.001	.578**	1	
Behavioural behaviour (BA)	.674**	.031	-.037	.345**	.545**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Students' ages and cumulative grade point averages from the prior semester, as well as the three subscales that make up the overall perceived behaviour towards learning English scale, are intercorrelated with one another. In most cases, the signature 2-tailed values were determined to be non-significant at the 0.01 level of precision. Similarly, a moderately to strongly positive link between scales and sub-scales is shown by the R-values in the majority of cases (i.e., 3 out of 5). On the other hand, students' reported behaviour towards learning English scale and sub-scale scores were weakly and negatively linked with their CGPA ($r = -.036$) and age ($r = .001$). So, it is safe to say that students' behaviour change had nothing to do with their academic performance and that students' academic performance was unrelated to their behaviour change in relation to English language acquisition.

Discussion

The purpose of this quantitative survey research was to look at how university students in Pakistan approach learning English in the classroom. The results showed that university students from Pakistan had a positive attitude towards the English language. This indicates that the students thought English was not a complex language to learn and that it had a significant social impact. In addition to not being bored in English classes, university students think that mastering English is crucial to their future success. Some prior researchers have found results that are consistent with these studies (e.g., Naiman et al., 1978; Dornyei, 1996). According to their findings, the most effective students are those who approach learning English with a positive attitude. Similarly, Dornyei (1996) found that students whose behavioural attitudes toward the English language are more positive had better success learning the language than students whose behavioural attitudes are negative.

The results showed that university students generally have a favourable outlook on studying English and that they act desirably and positively when doing so. University students from Pakistan showed a strong interest in learning English, a high level of drive, and a positive emotional response to the process, according to the results. These results are consistent with those of earlier research. As an example, Pang and Wu (2010) found that in order for students to really want to learn a language, they need to have a positive attitude towards the process. Students who exhibit hostile attitudes toward the English language do not, according to Gardner and Lambert (1972), possess any intrinsic incentive to improve their language skills.

Teachers have a crucial role in language acquisition in all of these capacities: as learners, facilitators, assessors, managers, and evaluators (Ly, 2024). Instructors pique their pupils' curiosity and pique their interest in studying. In addition, by participating in a variety of language learning activities, teachers assist students in becoming more independent learners. According to Seven (2020), teachers play a crucial role in the process of language learning and in generating interest in language acquisition among students. As a result, it is recommended that educational authorities and policymakers ensure teachers receive proper training before teaching English.

Conclusions

Positive correlations

Overall behaviour (OA) is positively correlated with emotional behaviour (EA), cognitive behaviour (CA), and behavioural behaviour (BA). This indicates that students who report a more positive overall behaviour towards learning English also tend to score higher on the subscales measuring emotional, cognitive, and behavioural aspects of this behaviour.

Emotional behaviour (EA) is positively correlated with cognitive behaviour (CA) and behavioural behaviour (BA). This suggests that students who report solid emotional engagement with learning English also tend to exhibit strong cognitive and behavioural engagement in this area.

Cognitive behaviour (CA) is positively correlated with behavioural behaviour (BA). This indicates that students who employ effective cognitive strategies for learning English are also likely to demonstrate positive behavioural tendencies towards this subject.

Weak correlations

Overall behaviour (OA) has weak negative correlations with both student age (SA) and CGPA. However, the magnitudes of these correlations are very small, and their practical significance is unclear.

Overall, the findings suggest that students' self-reported positive behaviours towards learning English are associated with more robust emotional, cognitive, and behavioural engagement in this domain. Age and academic performance (CGPA) appear to have minimal influence on this overall behaviour.

Recommendations

Following were the key recommendations based on the findings of this study.

1. It is recommended that students' emotional behaviours toward learning English should be enhanced and co-related towards learning English through proper motivation.
2. It is suggested that student's cognitive behaviours should be kept in mind when developing an English curriculum, curriculum should be according to students' cognitive level and should be well organized.
3. It is recommended that students' behavioural behaviours should be modified through proper counseling and motivation and co-related English language benefits to daily life and for job seeking.
4. The findings of the study suggest that university students, as well as their teachers further need to focus on improving students' capacities to augment further their behaviour towards learning English as a foreign language.

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