



RESEARCH PAPER

Writing Practices of English as a Second Language: The Exploration of L1's Influence

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ABSTRACT

The research aims at exploring the writings of English as L2, and influence of Urdu as L1 with the help of the data based on the written essays on "Pakistani Culture", collected from 15 university undergraduate students who are pursuing their study at the University of Management and Technology, Lahore and completing their graduation in different academic fields. These students belong to the same native languages i.e. Urdu and they use English language as L2. The theory of 'second language acquisition' proposed by Krashen (1981) will be used. Furthermore, to support the analytical procedure, different perspectives are taken into account presented by Villanueva (1989) which elaborates on the language levels as affected by L1. The paper focuses on the collected essays by exploring the influence of Urdu language. Findings reveal the influence of L1 (Urdu) in the writings of English language (L2) under the integration of code-switching, morphological inclination of L1 as well as wrong phonetic effect of L1 on L2's orthography. This study analyzes these elements of L1's influence in the writings of L2.

KEYWORDS Code-switching, First Language's Influence, L1's Influence, L2 Writing, Second Language Writing, Writing Practices

Introduction

Study of English (as an L2 or second language) has been emerged as a prominent area of English language and eminent research has been done that how second language is influenced by the first language in terms of pattern, structure, lexical items, grammatical rules, phonological aspects etc. under the essential skills of a language i.e. speaking, listening, writing and reading (Silva, 1993), (Paribakht, 2005), (Saville-Troike, 2006), (Hamada & Koda, 2008), (Clark, 2009), (William, 2012), (Ortega, 2015). All language skills are important and need efforts to be learned in case of second language acquisition. This study deals with the 'writing skills' which is an output or product-skill of language learning or acquisition which requires conscious language efforts to convey the ideas in the form of text. According to Jalilifar (2008), the product and process of writing is conditioned by the proficiency in language. Writing is, thus a creative ability which is not usually acquired but learned through social and academic context. It is not a random process 'to write' but requires proper application of grammatical rules and structures according to the norms of a language, available for writing (Casal & Lee, 2019). If one person writes it means one is practicing the available knowledge of a language as mentioned by Silva under the parasol of L2 acquisition (1993).

As described in the findings of Tony Silva (1993), writing in first language is considered as easier as compared to the writing in second language generally, because

the proficiency is more associated with the first language or Mother tongue as compared to the second language. Due to the stable knowledge and strong language skills with command over the use, usually first language is considered while learning second language in terms of different aspects (Hamada & Koda, 2008). Second language learners take help from their native or mother tongue to apply the norms in L2 to enhance the skills of language. Similarly, in second language writing practices, some of the first language's rules usually interfere, thus L1 has a great influence in terms of L2 writing (Paribakht, 2005).

This study highlights the interference of L1 or influence on L2 writing to provide the proper account. So, this research addresses the following research questions: 1) Whether and how does L1 influence the writing of L2?, 2) What is the significance of L1's influence on L2 writing?

The influence of L1 will be seen at lexical level, morphological level as well as orthographic level which are influenced by the knowledge of L1 to see the significance of L1 in L2 and to know the role of L1 in L2 writing especially. In this way, L1 will be seen in the writing output taken from the sample and this influence is not negative but taken as the positive transfer as the limited use of L1 is usually considered as normal one due to the cultural artifact and traditional boundary (Hamada & Koda, 2008). Similarly, as stated by Noor & Yasir (2022), learning a language other than the mother tongue, allows the learner to digest the culture and the influence of culture will be accompanied in the performance of L2.

On the other hand, the exploration of code-switching in the writing practices of English (as L2) analyses the lexical level. Code-switching in L2 writing by using L1 is a significant process of second language learning or acquisition process as highlighted by Khan (2012). Moreover, there are instances where students use the phonological characteristics of L1 to express the word in L2 thus result in wrong orthographic expressions. This type of words are usually used in both languages but some L2 learners make them orthographically wrong due to the phonological patterns of L1. Furthermore, the morphological level delineates the influence of L1 and the same pattern is applicable on L2 writings. So, the current study analyzes these concerns and areas.

Literature Review

Writing is considered as an output skill among the important skills of a language i.e. speaking, listening, writing, and reading. As an output skill like speaking, writing requires the command over the language to write correctly and according to the norms of writing in the specific language. These norms include application of correct grammatical rules as well as syntactic structure and other components of a language as pointed out by Jessica Williams (2012). Writing is a conscious effort which is expressed through the use of language and this use demands proficiency of that language to write effectively and according to the rules, as depicted by the conventions of the writing. Writing is thus a creative ability which enables writers to practice their language skills through the text of language. It may resurrects the passive vocabulary which is dormant in the mind and makes it active by using it, so in this way, it enhances the skills of language learning and gives the chance to practice the knowledge of a language as stated by Shannon Kenned (2018).

Liu and Braine (2005) claim that writing is more complex than other language skills. It is more difficult even from another output skill which is 'speaking'. Furthermore, writing is the way to gauge the language skill because writing depicts the level of the knowledge of a language which a person possesses (Liu & Braine, 2005). Sattyatham

(2008) explains that writing as an essential part enables us to learn through different steps. At first it enables writers to apply the grammatical structures, idioms, vocabulary and different set patterns of a language to apply in the writing. Secondly, writing provides the chance to bring creativity through different ideas and to go far beyond the boundary of the learned knowledge (Ratanapinyowong & Sattyatham, 2008). Thirdly, writing involves different activities at the same time like movement of eyes, thinking actively by using mind and creative-skills of writing, movement of hands to write according to the mental processing of writing activity. Thus in this way, writing and thinking ability influence each other during the writing process as explained by Raimes (1993), and allows writer to apply the requirements of writing.

Unlike native language speaking, writing is not acquired but learned through the conscious learning of language. It is learnt through proper process which starts from sounds or alphabets of a language which is followed by simple words and then so on. Writing is also get polished with reading skills. Furthermore, as illustrated by Uludag, Lindberga, McDonoughA & Payant, (2019), good piece of writing needs to depict the argument in an effective way to make the audience or readers convinced and it is done through the practice of writing in the required language to accomplish the written skills of that specific language (Uludag, Lindberga, McDonoughA, & Payant, 2019).

According to Heydari and Bagheri (2012), writing is not an easy process whether of first language or second language as it is based on learning the rules, norms and conventions of the writing along with the protocols of writing of a given language. Thus, it is a complex process of a language which needs conscious learning as well as conscious application of writing rules when carrying on writing practices. But they also assert that writing in foreign language is much more complex than the first language because of the proficiency level (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012). As proficiency is usually associated more with the first language and it is more fluent than the second language, generally because of the primacy of native language and command over the first language as compared to second or foreign language, as highlighted by Jalilifer (2008). Hussain and Hanif (2013) are of opinion that first language writers hesitate less while writing in their first language because of less possibility of committing errors due to the

Second language is any language other than the mother tongue or first language which is learned or acquired. Second language is usually not acquired but learned through the conscious learning efforts. To learn writing in second language requires much attention, focus and proficient knowledge of grammar, lexis, semantic, syntax, morphology etc. and other compositional elements as elaborated by Erdosy (2014). Jalilifar (2008) argues that writings of L2 is complex and difficult as compared to the first language because of the proficiency level. Second language is not as fluent as first language is usually considered to be. Usaha (2013) also supports the stance of Jalilifar (2008) that in second language learning, language is the problem for L2 writers because of their differences in competency and proficiency level of the second language and the first language (Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013). Less proficiency and complex nature of L2 or target language leads to commitment of these errors in L2 writings more as compared to the first language as discussed by some researchers (Khansir, 2012) (Hamada & Koda, 2008) (Paribakht, 2005) (Silva, 1993). The complexity of second language is the reason that second language learners commit errors in their speech as well as written responses.

In Pakistani context, according to the Ethnologue of Pakistan, 74 languages are spoken in Pakistan which are living languages and comprised of 66 indigenous and 8 non-indigenous languages (Ethnologue Pakistan, n.d.). Among these different

languages, Urdu and English languages are more preferred in Pakistan (Pathan, Ahmad, & Khan, 2017) as Urdu is the National and with this, English enjoys the position of an official language of Pakistan, according to the Constitution 1973 of Pakistan (n.d.) and also mentioned by Pathan, Ahmad & Khan (2017). Not all languages have the written capability as these languages are only limited to the speech (spoken in some regions of Pakistan) but languages which are fully furnished have the written expression as well, with the speech. First language is the mother tongue which is the native language which may differ from one region to another and one speech community to another speech community but English is the language which is acquired by people and being learned as a second language (which can be defined as the language(s) other than mother-tongue, as defined by Saville-Troike (2006)) in Pakistan and people are more curious to learn English language, as highlighted by Khan (2011), so English is preferred as being the official language of Pakistan as well as due to its emerging significance (Khan H. i., 2011), (Rukh, 2014). Furthermore, people of Pakistan have the anxiety and motivation to get the English language as an L2. According to the findings of Hashwani (2008), people of Pakistani have the proper extrinsic as well as the intrinsic motivation to learn and practice English language in their daily proceedings (Hashwani, 2008).

In Pakistan, medium of instruction is generally English and Urdu but there are some regions where regional languages are used as medium of instruction. The most preferred is English language with its Urdu as a medium of instructions as well as in the context of examination too, as stated by Dar & Khan (2015). So, the writing system in Pakistan is based on English and Urdu languages generally, at the national level. The competence level differs from one another and they face many difficulties to compete in the proficiency of English (Dar & Khan, 2015). Their different native languages may affect the acquisition process and performance of English language which leads to the instability in the whole repertoire of English language. In Pakistani context, In Pakistan, English is influenced by the Pakistan's National language Urdu thus have an influence of Urdu which makes the variety of Pakistani English different from the norm providing varieties (Yasir, 2019). So this study will see this characteristics of influence of L1 (Urdu) on English as an L2.

In this way, it is the obvious process that the native tongue usually impacts the knowledge and the performance of L2. It depends on the situation or the level at which L2 is practiced. The important influence can be seen in terms of code-switching which highlights the interference of the other language like use of Urdu words or terms in writings of English language. This interference of the mother tongue of Urdu speakers is common and also recognized across the boundaries of Pakistan. Code switching technique is the alternation between two or more languages in a phrase, sentence, the whole discourse (here code refers to the single morpheme to an entire language) (Khan H. I., 2012). This communicative technique is used by bilingual speakers which results in hybridity of expressions or words of two or more different languages (Paribakht, 2005). In case of English writings, Urdu or Punjabi speakers they use some expressions from their mother tongues to convey the meaning more accurately and directly. In this case, English is the matrix language while mixed language will be Urdu which will be used in the form of some words or may be phrases. Code-switching is used at different levels as following according to Mysers-scotton (1999).inter-sentential code-switching highlights the occurrence at the poles of the sentence whether starting or end. In intra-sentential code switching, it is done in the middle of the sentence, without any interruptions, pauses to indicate a change. Tag or Emblematic switching includes the inserting a tag from one language into the sentence in another language. This is based on a one word or phrase.

Material and Methods

This research is based on analyzing the influence of L1 (Urdu) on the target language writing. English is considered as L2 as it is used as the second language across Pakistan. Use of L1's pattern and influence will be studied. This will be done with the help of the data taken in the form of written essays in English language. Mainly the study focuses on the theory of second language acquisition proposed by Krashen (1981) which highlights the interference of L1 in the performance and acquisition of L2 at different levels. So, the study delineates different levels on which L2 writing gets influence from L1.

Furthermore, to support the analytical procedure, different perspectives will be taken into account as presented by Villanueva (1989) which elaborates on the language levels as affected by L1 in multiple ways.

Data Collection

As this research deals with the learners who use English (as L2) so the population is comprised of all the learners who are speakers of L2 i.e. English language. To achieve the aims of the research effectively, the sample was made limited to only 15 students who are pursuing their studies at University of management and Technology, Lahore (Pakistan). These students are undergraduate students belong to Urdu language as their native language and English as L2. Their ages are between 18-22 years. There is not any specification of the field or program but participants are enrolled in different departments of the disciplines like IT, Computer sciences, Biological sciences, Engineering etc. in order to avoid any discrimination.

To collect the data, participants were instructed to write an essay on the given topic. As an essay is the subjective and creative piece of writing so it is appropriate to study the participants' standing of their English and interference of L1 (Urdu). So, the piece of writing provides with the use of language by the participants and how they utilize their current available knowledge of second language in their writing practice.

Writing essay was accompanied by some rules and regulation to ensure the systematic way of operating the data collection. Participants were given the introduction of the activity that how they would be going through this task and how it would end. They were given the topic which was selected by the researcher randomly out of some more general essay topics which were suggested by some research scholars. So the selected essay's topic was *Pakistani Culture* which was told to the participants at the spot. They were given only 25 minutes to complete the written task. They were asked to write 200-300 words long essay in the allocated time. Equal time and equal chance was given to the respondents during this written activity to collect the data in the form of written essay. Essay contained name, qualification level and linguistic background written at the end of the document to make distinction and maintain proper record of the data.

Ethical Considerations

Researcher has taken and followed all the ethical considerations of doing and carrying on the research. At first, 'Request Form' was composed by the researcher to be sent to the participants first, which was followed by the signal of willingness or unwillingness of the respondents. Willing participants were then informed about the research that what this research is all about and what aims will be achieved after completion of the research project. No insistence or imposition was made to enforce people to participate in this research. Participants were ensured by the researcher about

the confidentiality of their demographic details and their participation. Moreover, privacy regarding the data was also conveyed to the participants successfully in order to give them an idea about the safety of their written excerpts.

Data was used objectively and carefully in the research procedure. No personal opinion was inserted in the data and analytical procedure thus, no signal of conscious subjectivity is integrated into the study. Furthermore, the overall environment was kept friendly and participants were free to inquire about anything regarding the research.

Results and Discussion

Different patterns and parameters of L1 were used by the writers in their essays which show the interference of L1 in the performance of L2 (English).

Code Switching/Mixing

Code switching highlights the interference of Mother Tongue in writings, as depicted by the writers in which they successfully embed the words from the mother-tongue (L1) into the target language (L2) and make the complex whole of the writing. Regarding this study, writing samples showed a great deal code-switching/mixing technique as the participants have used some hybrid words or code-switched terms which present the influence of the native-language in the L2. Participants' account of using code-switching was done consciously or unconsciously but these interfered images of first language portray the successful amalgamation in the writing excerpts which supports the stance of the writing and Krashen's theory (1981). Different instances show the use of code-switched terms or words differently as explained below.

Pakistanis show harmony and respect with each other, and depict a spirit of one qomiiyyat that is Pakistani.

This example uses the code-switched term *qomiiyyat* which is used in the English sentence as an intra-sentential code-switched term. The use of this word is definitely due to the interference of the first language which is Urdu as this word belongs to the Urdu language. Under this switching, the code-switched word is portraying the strong sense which is even stronger than the English substitute of the word 'Nationalism'. The interference of first language is interacting with the notion of the whole sentence to give a coherent whole.

We must oversee Halal and Haram in our earnings, investments, and relations.

Use of the words *Halal and Haram* also portrays the influence of Urdu in English of the writer and based on the intra-sentential code-switched term. This word is conveying the sense of Islamic value which is portrayed in the MT instead of the English counterpart of the word.

Lok Virsa depict our cultural richness.

It leads from traditional styles like Qawali and Ghazzal to more genres that merge Pakistani music with Western especially sufi music.

Here the word *Lok Virsa* has been used which is the cultural term and based on the inter-sentential code switching as it lies in the beginning preceded by the pause and stop. In this way first language's cultural impact is also depicted through the writings. Writings can be based on the cultural background of the mother tongue which interferes whether in first or second language. In the second language writings, the cultural terms and their impact convey strong senses of cultural significance of the first language which

remains dominant usually in all the languages acquired by the speaker. In the same way, the words like *Qawwali and Ghazal* and on the other hand *sufi music* have been used by the writers in the written excerpts. These terms belong to the same category of the cultural terms which represent the cultural inclination of the first language which is used in the context of the second language. In the same way, the following examples also cover the same notion of the interference due to the cultural facet of the first language.

While on the other hand the part of culture which differs is their mother language, dressing style like dhoti, shalwar, qameez, paggri, and also skin colour, race etc.

These cultural terms *Dhoti, Shalwar, Qameez, Paggri* are used by the writers in the first language consciously due to the difficulty in finding the exact equivalent of the word portrayed. There are many words which are used in the first language while writing in English language just to signify the cultural amelioration of the first language. Other words like, *Ajrak, Topi, Saris, Dupatta, Dhammal, Bhangra, Jerga, Bethak, Daal, Chawal, Biryani, Saag, Kehwa, Halwa, Desi drinks, Paratha, Lassi* etc. These terms are affiliated with the particular food and dressing items which are prevalent in Pakistan. The use of these words in the mother tongue highlight the influence of Urdu in English writings.

This type of interference is also common in the context of Fairs and Festivals as respondent writers used these words as in their first language because of the issue in finding the equivalent in the second language English. The participants used the words *Tehwar, Urs, Basant, Eid Milad un Nabi, Mela Chiragah, Mehndi, Nikkah, Sunnah* etc. all these words have been used in the writings of English language due to the interference of the first language of the writers. Furthermore, among these words, the Islamic terms and words also depict the interference of the first language which is based on the Islamic culture as well as the Islamic values. In this way, the use of Islamic vocabulary from the mother tongue highlights the interference of the first language. Being Muslims, we use these Islamic cultural values in our first languages. When we write in target language, the use of these words act as the interference of native-tongue in the writings of English.

Thus, direct inclusion of the words from the Urdu or the 1st language results in code-switched terms which are embedded in the English writings by the writers. Writers also use these words from their native language due to the active vocabulary of the first language as well as due to the finding difficulty of the exact equivalent in the second language. This leads to the use of words directly from L1 to L2's practices which is much used in the Pakistani context as per the data collected. Moreover, the use of some cultural vocabulary from the first language has become the norm in Pakistani English writings as explained by Khan (2012). So, the use of first language's words are used by the writers consciously and unconsciously at both levels. One more interesting reason is that, being Pakistani, we follow Urdu language and some of its vocabulary is borrowed by the regional language speakers in their language practices which gradually become the part of their native language. This fact leads to the stable knowledge of the cultural words and terms in all languages which are used by the writers in their writings to portray the cultural and other terms directly in their first language.

Use of native language's words presents the stronger sense of the words portrayed in the mother-tongue language as compared to L2 language's substitutes. The cultural background and the linguistic significance of these words convey the communicative function in an appropriate way. But the use of English gets contaminated with the integration of the other language's words in this way, essence of English as a second language gets interconnected with other language's practices across the cultural boundary of Pakistan. In this way, first language interferes directly in the performance of the English as L2 in the form of writing practices.

L1's Phonetic/Phonological Effect on L2's Orthography

On the Other hand, native-language influences in the performance of target-language at different levels. These levels can be morphological, lexical, phonological, syntactic etc. Phonology of native language interacts with L2 and sometimes results in the wrong pronunciation. This pronunciation may lead to the formation of wrong orthography or spellings of the word for L2 learners. These instances have been found in samples but very few which are based on the spelling formation on the basis of the phonological aspect of the word in the mother tongue. The words are bilingual and present in both first and second language. These words are misspelled and mispronounced by the writers and speakers while writing and speaking in L2. Following words show the L1 (Urdu) pronunciation-based spellings in L2 (English):

Siraiki (Saraiki)

Ramazan (Ramadan)

Sqwash (Squash)

These above mentioned words are based on the spellings associated with the phonological characteristics of these words in Urdu as L1. Normal pronunciation patterns in L1 influence the pronunciation in L2 of the words which occur in both languages. *Siraiki* word is spelled wrongly by placing the wrong vowel in the beginning which is due to its general and common pronunciation in Urdu language. Similarly, the word "Ramadan" is pronounced with sound /z/ in Urdu but English spellings are based on the sound /ð/ represented by 'd' alphabet. So, this difference of pronunciation may influence the orthographic formation from one language to another. In the same way, 'squash' is pronounced as *sqwash* because of the influence of L1's pronunciation. So in this way, phonology/phonetic effect of the mother tongue also influences the second language.

Morphological Association

Furthermore, interference works in different ways in the performance of the second language as different factors affect different in the output of the second language. One important fact is that words are formed in the second language based on the first language. These native language's words are formed by adding the morphological units with them and creating the new word which depict the representation of the first language morphologically. The words like *Pakistani*, *Punjabi*, *Sindhi*, *Balochi*, *Balti* words depict the essence of Urdu language as the first language. These words are formed as are in Urdu but when borrowed to English language, morphological suffixes are added to them with the base words as mentioned below:

Pakistan + i = Pakistani

Sindh + i = Sindhi

Punjab + i = Punjabi

Baloch + i = Balochi

All these words have the suffix "i" with them which turn these words into the adjectives. The different instance of such kind of words can be seen in the word *Balti* which is the shortening of the word by deleting some suffixes and making it shorter to make an adjective out of it. So, the 'Balti' word is derived from 'Baltistan' by the process of shortening. In this way, some words are formed with the help of L1 in L2 like English

and Urdu. The influence of the mother tongue allows these words to be embedded in the lexis of the second language directly or by some transformations as mentioned above.

Conclusion

Under this study, the influence of L1 was seen in the context of L2 which was highlighted through three different categories which are based on the integration of code-switching majorly in L2. Moreover, morphological association of L1 is also there in the writings of L2, thus it was studied with the support of the collected data. Moreover, the instances of wrong orthographic expressions are sometimes also there due to the phonological patterns of L1. Consequently, under all these aspects L1 has the influence in the performance or output of L2. As this context highlights the Urdu as first and English as second language, similarly, other varieties also influence L2 of native speakers of different languages.

Use of code-switching is usually considered as the significant part because some writers use the cultural and traditional terms in L1 in order to retain the real essence of the word in L1, L2 in this way, gets direct impact with the use of L1's vocabulary. The above discussed facts signify the importance of L1 in the learning process of L2 and in the performance of L2 from the beginning of the journey of learning or acquiring the second language.

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