

GLOBAL LANGUAGE, LOCAL VOICES: THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE ON NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

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Abstract

This study explores how English shapes student identity. It focuses on undergraduate students at Islamia College. English is used daily in classrooms and assignments. Many students also use it in social settings. The study looks at two main areas: cultural identity and academic identity. The research uses Identity Negotiation Theory. It explains how language shapes how people see themselves. A structured questionnaire was given to 100 students. Data were collected using Likert scale responses. Results were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings show mixed views about English and culture. Some students feel closer to global culture. Others feel distant from their own traditions. Many say English helps them accept other cultures. But some also feel it weakens their local roots. On academic identity, results are more positive. Students say English boosts confidence and learning. It helps them feel like true university students. English also supports classroom participation. Many say it helps them access global knowledge. However, not all students benefit equally. Those with lower English skills feel left out. Some remain unsure about their identity. The study highlights this gap. It calls for support for such students. In conclusion, English offers both growth and challenge. It helps students build a modern identity. But it may also reduce cultural connection. The study suggests more bilingual support and identity-safe classrooms. It offers guidance for teachers, institutions, and researchers. English should support both global and local belonging.

Keywords:

English as an International Language, identity, cultural identity, academic identity, university students.

Introduction

English is now used around the world. It connects people who speak different native languages. This global use makes it an international language. In education, business, and online spaces, English is the main tool of communication (Kurusu et al., 2024). Many universities use English for teaching, research, and collaboration. With globalisation, students move across countries to study. Even in non-English-speaking nations, English is often the medium of instruction. This shift impacts students' sense of self. Some begin to think and speak in English more than in their mother tongue (Shirahata, 2023). As students adapt to new ways of learning, they also reshape their identity.

Language is more than just a way to speak. It plays a central role in building identity. When students learn and use a second language, they shape how they see themselves. Language connects thought, self-expression, and belonging. It affects how students relate to their communities and their academic world. For many students, using English changes how they talk, think, and act. It creates new ways of seeing the world (Furman & Aleksandrak, 2023). This change is not always easy. Students may feel stuck between two worlds. One shaped by their native culture. The other built through English.

Cultural identity and academic identity often mix in university life. Students must learn academic English to succeed. This helps them join global learning spaces. But it may also

pull them away from home culture (Achamrah, 2022). When students write, speak, and read in English daily, their thinking shifts. They may start to adopt global values over local ones. English helps them fit in but may also cause inner conflict. Many students feel pride in their new skills. But they also worry about losing parts of themselves (Girbau & Gubern, 2013). In academic spaces, English becomes a marker of intelligence and status. But not all students have the same skills. Those with weak English feel left out. Language then becomes a barrier, not a bridge. This dual role of English creates both growth and struggle. Students gain academic voice but may lose cultural roots.

English plays a major role. It is used in classrooms, exams, research, and student clubs. Students often write essays, give presentations, and take notes in English. Their daily academic life revolves around it. This constant use affects how they see themselves both academically and culturally (Ilić, 2023). Language and identity are deeply connected. Language can shape how we feel about our culture, values, and roles. When students use English more than their native language, they might feel proud. But they may also feel distant from their local culture. These mixed emotions are part of identity negotiation (Husna & Nasrullah, 2023). This is especially true for undergraduates. They are still growing emotionally and intellectually. English helps them build confidence. But it may also challenge their connection to home and heritage (Situmorang et al., 2021).

English is used widely at Islamia College in classrooms, exams, and discussions. However, little is known about how this affects students' cultural and academic identities. Most students speak other languages at home. But they often switch to English in academic spaces (Husna & Nasrullah, 2023). While EIL is studied globally, fewer studies explore how it impacts student identity in Pakistan. Research in similar non-English-speaking countries shows identity shifts among students using English daily (Ilić, 2023). According to Identity Negotiation Theory, language affects how people see and present themselves. Yet this has been underexplored locally. Students may lose connection to their culture or feel less confident in their native language (Situmorang et al., 2021). These shifts can impact both academic performance and self-worth. The main focus of the study is to examine how the use of EIL influences the cultural and academic identity of undergraduate students at Islamia College.

This study contributes to Identity Negotiation Theory by applying it within a South Asian university setting i.e. Islamia College Peshawar. It highlights how English influences identity in multilingual academic environments (Shirahata, 2023). The research offers insight into how students see themselves through English use in formal education. It supports educators and policymakers. The study offers evidence for culturally sensitive language strategies. It also promotes awareness of students' identity challenges. Balancing global language learning and cultural values remains important.

Research Questions

1. How does the use of English as an International Language influence the cultural identity of undergraduate students at Islamia College?
2. How does the use of English as an International Language influence the academic identity of undergraduate students at Islamia College?

Literature Review

English is widely used as an international language for communication worldwide (Shirahata, 2023). It serves as a medium in academic, social, and professional contexts. Identity negotiation theory explains how individuals adapt their identity based on language use

(Aljasir, 2020). Students modify behaviours and beliefs to fit different linguistic environments. English proficiency influences students' cultural identity in multilingual spaces (Cai et al., 2022). It also affects their social inclusion. English use impacts self-perception (Situmorang, 2020). Professional identity development is strongly linked to English competency (Zhang & Wang, 2022). Confidence in English enhances career growth. It also boosts leadership skills (Meihami & Rashidi, 2020).

This review explores how English affects identity negotiation among students. It examines cultural and professional identity changes due to English use. Relevant theories and studies provide insight into language's role. They highlight how language shapes student identities. This will contribute to understanding identity shifts. It focuses on multilingual environments.

Theoretical Framework: Identity Negotiation Theory

Identity Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey, 1999) explains how individuals adjust identities through communication (Aljasir, 2020). It suggests identity formation depends on social interactions. It also depends on linguistic interactions (Cai et al., 2022). In multilingual environments, language proficiency affects self-perception. It also influences identity stability (Wimalasiri, 2021). Cultural background also influences how identities evolve in diverse settings (Meihami & Rashidi, 2020).

Communication plays a crucial role in identity shifts among students in academic spaces (Cai et al., 2022). Students experience identity conflicts as they integrate. They face challenges in new linguistic environments (Li, 2015). Language ideologies shape their identity construction. They also influence academic participation. Linguistic adaptation is essential for social inclusion. It supports belonging in higher education settings (Vega et al., 2021). Rosalina (2021) states that English proficiency shapes students' academic confidence. It also impacts their career aspirations. Wang et al. (2020) highlight that students with strong English skills engage more actively. They participate better in academic communities. DeJong (2017) argue that limited English proficiency often leads to struggles. These struggles relate to identity integration. Islamia College students navigate cultural and professional identities through English use. English serves as a bridge for academic participation. It also aids career advancement. Those proficient in English access better opportunities, while others face barriers in social and professional settings (Vega et al., 2021). Academic engagement and identity negotiation depend significantly on language competency.

EIL and Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is formed through shared language, traditions, and social values (Heggernes, 2021). It reflects how individuals associate with a particular community and maintain heritage (Bennu, 2021). Language is central to cultural belonging, shaping communication and social identity (R'boul, 2021). Speaking a dominant language can strengthen group identity or cause cultural assimilation (Alfarhan, 2016).

Hossain (2024) state that English impacts non-native speakers' cultural identities by influencing self-expression and social integration. In China, students balance English learning with preserving local cultural values (Zhang & Liu, 2022). Farani and Yustisia (2021) highlight that English enhances career prospects but raises concern about language imperialism. Some argue that English promotes cultural hybridity rather than replacing native traditions (Tan et al., 2020). However, Wei (2024) warns that English can erode local languages by prioritising global communication. The role of English in cultural identity remains complex, with both benefits and challenges.

English is dominant in Pakistan's education system and professional fields (Ajmal et al., 2020). It is associated with socioeconomic advancement. However, it can cause detachment from native linguistic traditions (Asiri, 2019). Students at Islamia College may experience identity shifts. These occur as they integrate English into academic and social lives (Zhang, 2024). While English provides access to global opportunities, it also distances individuals. It separates them from local heritage (Liang, 2024).

Research highlights the complex relationship between English and identity negotiation (Bennu, 2021). Some studies suggest English threatens indigenous languages. It does this by shifting linguistic preferences (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Others argue that bilingualism fosters cultural integration. It supports inclusion rather than replacement (Sabirova et al., 2021). In South Asia, English is both a pathway to social mobility. It is also a tool for marginalization (Baker, 2015).

English Proficiency and Professional Identity Development

Professional identity develops through academic experiences, self-perception, and career aspirations (Barbarà-i-Molinero et al., 2017). It reflects how individuals integrate knowledge, skills, and values into professional roles. Language proficiency plays a vital role in career opportunities and job mobility (Arsad et al., 2014). Mastery of English improves employability and professional adaptability (Prasetya, 2023). Akther (2022) states that English proficiency enhances access to global networking, research, and international careers. Fluency in English contributes to leadership skills and career confidence (Al Jumiah, 2024). Kalenius (2019) highlights that professionals with high English proficiency engage in cross-cultural collaborations and multinational projects. Those with lower proficiency often experience career stagnation and limited opportunities (Zhang & Wang, 2022).

Research links language skills to higher income, promotions, and career mobility (Tanjung et al., 2021). English is often a requirement for leadership roles in global markets. Mohammadkarimi (2023) notes that many students view English as a necessity rather than a mere skill. However, those with limited proficiency struggle to compete in professional environments (Xu, 2024). Employers in Pakistan consider English proficiency essential for recruitment and career growth (Ajmal et al., 2020). Fluency in English improves job prospects and allows graduates to secure competitive positions (Galante, 2015). Students at Islamia College may perceive English as an advantage in career progression (Hafeez, 2023). However, those with poor English skills face challenges securing employment in competitive markets (Anggarista & Wahyudin, 2022).

Studies on EIL in South Asia focus mainly on linguistic policies and multilingual ecologies. However, research on undergraduate students in Pakistan and their identity negotiation through English is limited. Studies on English and professional identity focus on employment trends rather than student perspectives (Sah & Kubota, 2022). This study fills the gap by exploring identity negotiation at Islamia College Peshawar (Nakassis & Annamalai, 2020).

This literature review has highlighted the role of EIL in shaping cultural and professional identities. English influences identity negotiation among students in academic and social settings. Studies show English's impact on social inclusion, career mobility, and cultural adaptation. Research gaps exist in understanding identity shifts among university students in Pakistan. This study fills this gap by focusing on Islamia College students and their identity negotiation.

Methodology

Research Design and Strategy

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design. The focus was to examine how students perceive the role of English in shaping their cultural and academic identity without testing any specific hypotheses. This type of design is effective. It helps summarize

attitudes and opinions using structured instruments (Jenkins, 2013). The strategy was survey-based, using a standardized questionnaire to reach a large number of students. Since English functions as a global academic medium, especially in higher education, it significantly impacts students. It shapes how they form their academic and personal identities (Reynolds, 2016). A descriptive design was appropriate. It captured the range and patterns of these experiences among undergraduate students.

Participants

The sample comprised 100 undergraduate students enrolled at Islamia College, aged 18-24. A non-probability purposive sampling method was used. This approach was chosen. Participants needed experience with English in an academic context. All participants used English regularly for academic tasks. These included reading, writing, or participating in classroom discussions.

Inclusion criteria:

- Enrolled in undergraduate programs
- Use English for academic communication

This sampling technique ensured that participants had relevant exposure to EIL. It is a key variable in shaping both cultural and academic identity (Jordão, 2016).

Instrument

The data was collected using a structured questionnaire (20 statements) delivered via Likert scale questions. Participants responded to statements about their cultural attachment, language preferences, and academic experiences related to English. The 3-point Likert scale ranged from "Agree" to "Disagree". This format was selected for its ease of analysis. It also captures degrees of agreement or disagreement with various statements (Zhang & Liu, 2024).

Questionnaire items focused on:

- the impact of English language use on the cultural identity of undergraduate students at Islamia College.
- to explore the role of English language use in shaping the academic identity of undergraduate students at Islamia College.

Procedures for Collecting Data

Data were collected online via WhatsApp groups affiliated with different departments and student societies at Islamia College. The questionnaire link was shared through messages, inviting voluntary participation. This method ensured wide reach and convenience for participants. Using WhatsApp allowed for rapid and low-cost distribution of the survey and ensured anonymity. It also supported diverse participation from students in various academic disciplines and cultural backgrounds. Given the high engagement of students on WhatsApp, this method proved to be an efficient platform for data collection during the academic session.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. The software used for analysis included SPSS. The main techniques applied were:

- Frequencies and percentages for each response option
- Mean scores to gauge the central tendency for each item
- Standard deviations to measure variation in responses

No inferential statistics (e.g., regression, chi-square) were applied. The goal was to describe student perceptions related to identity and English use, not to test specific hypotheses. Descriptive analysis helped highlight how students experience identity negotiation and

academic affiliation through the medium of English (Aleksandrowicz-Pędich, 2019). The dominance of English in academic discourse can influence students' self-perception and legitimacy in academic environments (Halic et al., 2009). Descriptive analysis provided a clear picture of such identity trends in the local context.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained through out the research. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. Students were informed about the purpose of the study, the anonymity of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any time. No personal data (names, roll numbers, emails) were collected, ensuring full confidentiality. The questionnaire included a consent statement at the beginning, which participants had to accept before proceeding. As identity and language are sensitive topics, care was taken to avoid emotionally charged or leading questions. The survey respected cultural values and maintained neutrality throughout.

Findings

This section presents the findings of the study based on student responses to the questionnaire. It focuses on how English language use influences both cultural and academic identity among undergraduate students at Islamia College. The results are analyzed using descriptive statistics and discussed in relation to the study's objectives.

Cultural Identity and English Use

For the statement "I feel more connected to global culture when I speak English", 33% of students agreed or strongly agreed, while 37% disagreed. Neutral responses were also high at 30%. Regarding "Using English has made me more open to other cultures", 46% agreed or strongly agreed, while 24% disagreed. A notable 30% remained neutral. In response to "English influences the way I express my cultural identity", 45% agreed or strongly agreed, while 23% disagreed. A large group (32%) stayed neutral, showing students are divided on how English shapes cultural expression.

For "Speaking English makes me feel distant from my native culture", 47% agreed or strongly agreed. About 27% disagreed, and 26% were neutral. This indicates a significant number feel cultural distance due to English. On "I often switch between cultural behaviors when I speak English", 38% agreed or strongly agreed, 29% disagreed, and 33% were neutral. Regarding "English has influenced my thinking and worldview", 50% agreed or strongly agreed, while 23% disagreed and 27% remained neutral. This reflects that English affects students' mental frameworks.

When asked if "I feel more confident expressing myself in English than in my native language", 45% agreed or strongly agreed, while 32% disagreed. About 23% were neutral. In response to "English use in academic settings has affected my connection to traditional cultural values", 48% agreed or strongly agreed, 21% disagreed, and 31% were neutral. English may weaken ties with cultural traditions. For "Speaking English helps me blend into diverse social groups", 53% agreed or strongly agreed, 18% disagreed, and 29% were neutral. Finally, for "I find it difficult to maintain my cultural identity while using English", 45% agreed or strongly agreed, while 24% disagreed. A significant 30% were neutral. Some students struggle to hold on to their culture while using English.

Table 1. Impact of English on Students' Cultural Identity

| No | Statement | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------|----------|
| C1 | I feel more connected to global culture when I speak English. | 33% | 30% | 37% |
| C2 | Using English has made me more open to other cultures. | 46% | 30% | 24% |
| C3 | English influences the way I express my cultural identity. | 45% | 32% | 23% |
| C4 | Speaking English makes me feel distant from my native culture. | 47% | 26% | 27% |
| C5 | I often switch between cultural behaviors when I speak English. | 38% | 33% | 29% |
| C6 | English has influenced my thinking and worldview. | 50% | 27% | 23% |
| C7 | I feel more confident expressing myself in English than in my native language. | 45% | 23% | 32% |
| C8 | English use in academic settings has affected my connection to traditional cultural values. | 48% | 31% | 21% |
| C9 | Speaking English helps me blend into diverse social groups. | 53% | 29% | 18% |
| C10 | I find it difficult to maintain my cultural identity while using English. | 45% | 30% | 24% |

Academic Identity and English Use

For the statement “Using English helps me express my ideas more clearly in academic settings,” 42% agreed or strongly agreed, while 28% disagreed. A large group (30%) stayed neutral. This shows that while many benefit academically from English, some still face challenges. In “I feel more like a university student when I communicate in English,” a strong 60% agreed or strongly agreed. Only 14% disagreed, and 26% were neutral. This suggests that English enhances students' academic self-image.

When asked if “English improves my participation and confidence in classroom discussions,” 52% agreed or strongly agreed. Just 13% disagreed, while 34% remained neutral. This reflects the positive impact of English on classroom engagement for many students. For “English proficiency contributes to how I see myself as a capable learner,” 56% agreed or strongly agreed, with 19% disagreeing. Neutral responses were 24%. This indicates that English skills influence students' academic self-confidence.

In “I identify more strongly as an academic when I use English,” 57% agreed or strongly agreed. Only 19% disagreed and 24% were neutral. This shows a clear link between English use and academic identity formation. On the item “I find it easier to engage with academic content in English,” 44% agreed or strongly agreed, while 21% disagreed and 34% were neutral.

For “Writing and presenting in English strengthens my academic identity,” 53% agreed or strongly agreed. Around 19% disagreed and 27% stayed neutral. In response to “I feel more accepted in academic communities when I use English,” 63% agreed or strongly agreed. Only 6% disagreed. This shows that English fosters a sense of academic belonging.

When asked if “English helps me access scholarly knowledge and global academic resources,” 56% agreed or strongly agreed, while 17% disagreed. Finally, for “My academic confidence has increased due to my English language use,” 46% agreed or strongly agreed. Around 18% disagreed, while a large portion (35%) stayed neutral. Many students associate English with improved academic confidence.

Table 2. Influence of English on Academic Identity Development

| No | Statement | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------|----------|
| A1 | Using English helps me express my ideas more clearly in academic settings. | 42% | 30% | 28% |
| A2 | I feel more like a university student when I communicate in English. | 60% | 26% | 14% |
| A3 | English improves my participation and confidence in classroom discussions. | 52% | 34% | 13% |
| A4 | English proficiency contributes to how I see myself as a capable learner. | 56% | 24% | 19% |
| A5 | I identify more strongly as an academic when I use English. | 57% | 24% | 19% |
| A6 | I find it easier to engage with academic content in English. | 44% | 34% | 21% |
| A7 | Writing and presenting in English strengthens my academic identity. | 53% | 27% | 19% |
| A8 | I feel more accepted in academic communities when I use English. | 63% | 31% | 6% |
| A9 | English helps me access scholarly knowledge and global academic resources. | 56% | 26% | 17% |
| A10 | My academic confidence has increased due to my English language use. | 46% | 35% | 18% |

Discussion

Cultural Identity and English Use

This study explores how English affects students’ cultural identity. The responses show mixed feelings. Some students feel connected. Others feel distant. This shows how English has both positive and negative effects.

As many as 33% of students feel more connected to global culture through English. But 37% disagree with that statement. This split reflects two experiences. Some students use English to access global content. Others feel English makes them lose local connection. This finding supports the idea that English promotes global belonging (Ilić, 2023). But it also confirms that English can weaken local identity (Ye, 2024). This agrees with cultural hybridity theory. Students mix global and local ideas. Some adapt easily. Others feel lost in between. English brings new values. But it may also replace old ones (Zhang & Liu, 2024; Shirahata, 2023). This mix of comfort and conflict is common in bilingual students.

Not less than 46% of students say English made them more open to other cultures. This shows cultural integration is happening. Students become more aware of global practices. They are more tolerant. They interact more freely. These findings align with Hossain (2024),

who said English opens the mind to other cultures. Similarly, Choudhury (2013) found students felt more culturally aware through English. Moreover, 45% of students say English influences how they express cultural identity. Language shapes how people show emotions, habits, and values. In multilingual settings, identity is not fixed. It shifts. Students may use English to express new ideas. But this can also change their personality. This supports Bennu (2021), who found second-language speakers change how they present themselves. It also confirms Identity Negotiation Theory. Identity is shaped by language and context (Cai et al., 2022; Wimalasiri, 2021).

A majority of students (47%) say English makes them feel distant from their native culture. 45% say it is hard to maintain cultural identity while using English. This shows cultural disconnection. English gives access to education. But it may cause loss of cultural roots. Students may feel pressure to fit into global norms. They may ignore local values. This supports findings by Wei (2024), who warned that English use can reduce cultural attachment. Ajmal et al. (2020) also noted that English in Pakistan may weaken local traditions. Here the results diverge from some global studies. In many countries, bilingual students feel empowered by using both languages. Farani and Yustisia (2021) believe English helps balance global and local identity. Norton and Toohey (2011) said bilingualism enriches identity. But in this study, many students experience loss rather than gain.

Furthermore, 50% say English influences their worldview. This shows deep changes in thinking. Language affects thoughts. It reshapes how students see the world. Students gain new ideas, but may also lose old ones. Meihami and Rashidi (2020) support this in their study. They found English shapes thinking patterns and values. Tan et al. (2020) also said that English education creates new mental frameworks. 38% say they switch cultural behaviours when speaking English. This shows students behave differently depending on the language. This supports the idea that language affects personality and actions. Rosalina (2021) found that multilinguals change expression styles across languages. Nakassis and Annamalai (2020) also observed that students develop split identities between local and English-speaking settings. Finally, 53% say English helps them blend into diverse groups. This means English helps students make friends and fit in. This is a positive effect. It shows social integration. Students find comfort in shared language. This confirms the social benefit of English found by Sung (2016). Vega et al. (2021) also show that language builds belonging in academic groups.

Academic Identity and English Use

The data shows 42% of students agree that English helps them express academic ideas more clearly. In addition, 60% feel more like university students when using English. These results suggest that English improves both clarity and academic identity. Students begin to see themselves as more competent learners when they use English. This supports the findings of Zhang and Wang (2022), who note that students with English skills feel more confident in academic roles.

As many as 52% of students say English improves their classroom confidence. This means they speak more and feel more involved in class. Many students may hesitate to speak in their native language in academic settings. English helps them break that barrier. Barbarà-i-Molinero et al. (2017) found similar results in their study of classroom dynamics, where students with better English engaged more in group work and presentations. Moreover, 57% say English strengthens their academic identity. This means they feel more like scholars when using English. These findings confirm that language is a strong part of self-perception in academia. Students link English with being part of a learning community. This aligns with

the work of Wimalasiri (2021), who shows that language skills shape student roles and how they see themselves in educational settings.

More than half of participants (56%) say English helps them access global content. This is a clear sign that students value English as a tool for learning. Through English, they can read more, watch lectures, and join global academic networks. This supports Prasetya (2023), who shows that English provides academic access to international research and digital platforms. Additionally, 63% feel more accepted in academic communities when using English. This reflects a strong connection between language and belonging. Students feel included when they share the same academic language as peers and teachers. These findings match the work of McKeown and Ramadori (2022), who found that English use builds a sense of recognition and identity in university spaces.

Many students believe English improves their future career opportunities. Their academic and professional identities are linked. English is not just a subject. It is a path to better jobs, confidence, and leadership. Mohammadkarimi (2023) shows that students with strong English see better career growth and self-esteem in professional environments. This study finds that English increases academic confidence for 46% of students. These students likely feel more ready to present and write academic content. The same pattern appears in research by Reynolds (2016), who found students linked English ability to authority and academic power in their field.

However, many students still remain neutral. For some statements, neutral responses are 30–35%. This shows a divide in how students experience academic identity through English. Some benefit. Others may still struggle.

Xu (2024) explains that students with low English proficiency often feel left out and less confident in classrooms. There is also a limit to how deeply some students relate to academic content in English. While 44% agree it helps, many stay unsure. Language barriers may affect how students connect with subject matter. Mohammad et al. (2020) found that even when students use English well, they may not fully engage with complex content or academic arguments. The findings mostly align with recent studies. They show that English boosts academic identity, participation, and access. However, this study also reveals a challenge. Not all students benefit equally. Those with limited English may feel isolated or underprepared. This divergence shows the need for support systems.

The study by Furman and Aleksandrak (2023) found that students in non-native English environments feel both empowered and challenged when using academic English. These mixed feelings also appear in the current research. English helps students grow their academic identity. But it also reminds them of the limits in their language ability. These contrasts are important. They show identity is not fixed. It grows, but sometimes with difficulty. Some students thrive using English. Others feel stuck or judged. This supports the theory of identity as a dynamic process. It changes over time. Students shape their identity through practice, effort, and feedback. Badiozaman (2017) confirms that academic identity is built step by step through experiences with language and teaching environments.

In summary, the findings show that English helps many students feel confident, accepted, and connected. It improves classroom engagement and global access. Still, not all students feel the same. Some remain neutral or face language barriers. The results mostly align with global literature but also highlight local challenges. Support for struggling students is needed to close this identity gap.

Conclusion

This study explored how EIL influences identity. It focused on undergraduate students at Islamia College. Two areas are discussed—cultural identity and academic identity. The

results showed mixed feelings about English and culture. Some students feel more connected to global culture. Others feel distant from their own. English helps students become open to other cultures. But it may also reduce their link to traditional values. Nearly half of the students say they struggle to maintain their cultural identity while using English. This reflects cultural tension. It supports the idea that English can both help and hurt identity. These findings confirm Identity Negotiation Theory. Students adjust how they see themselves based on language use. Some feel proud using English. Others feel that it replaces part of their native self. English creates a space where students can grow. But it also brings confusion about belonging. Academic identity findings are more positive. Students feel more confident when using English in class. Many say it helps them express ideas clearly. It also makes them feel more like university students.

Over half feel that English strengthens their academic identity. It gives them access to knowledge, global content, and academic communities. English is also linked to career goals and leadership roles. However, not all experiences are equal. Neutral responses show that some students remain unsure. Those with weak English skills may feel excluded. This shows identity is not the same for everyone. It depends on language ability and personal background. In summary, English supports academic growth. It also creates new cultural identities. But it may reduce students' connection to local traditions. The study highlights the need to balance English learning with cultural preservation.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, the sample size was limited to 100 students from one college. This makes it hard to generalize findings to all universities in Pakistan. Future studies should include more institutions and diverse student groups. Second, the method used was purely quantitative. Only Likert-scale questions were used. This means student emotions or personal stories were not explored in depth. Including interviews or open-ended questions could provide richer data.

Third, the study focuses only on undergraduate students. Postgraduate or diploma students were not included. Their identity experiences may differ. Including them could improve the scope of the research. Also, the research only explores two identity types—cultural and academic. Other types, such as social or professional identity, were not covered. A broader study could give a fuller picture of how English affects students. Finally, the research was cross-sectional. It reflects opinions at one point in time. Identity is not fixed. It changes. A long-term study could show how identity develops across a student's academic life.

Recommendations

For educators, it is important to design bilingual teaching strategies. These should celebrate local languages and values while building English skills. This helps students stay rooted in cultural identity while gaining academic growth. Teachers should also encourage identity-safe classrooms. In such spaces, students express both global and local views. This creates a positive and safe learning space and reduces identity conflict.

For curriculum developers, cultural content should be part of English courses. This helps students maintain their connection to heritage. Local culture must be present, not replaced. Courses should use texts and activities that support multilingual identity. This allows students to value their language background while learning English.

For institutional policymakers, support must be provided for students with low English proficiency. This reduces inequality and prevents identity-based exclusion. Language support ensures equal access and improves student confidence. Institutions should also conduct

orientation programs. These should raise awareness about how language shapes identity. This helps students prepare emotionally and socially for change.

For future research, mixed-method studies are needed. These capture deeper student experiences. Quantitative data shows patterns. Qualitative input reveals emotion and culture. Researchers should also do longitudinal studies. These track identity shifts from first to final year. Identity is not fixed. It grows over time through exposure and practice. Finally, research should include more institutions. This will test findings across Pakistan and allow comparison. A wider sample gives a national view of how English shapes identity.

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