

Linguistic Competence; A comparative analysis of DMC and NON DMC Cases in Second Language Acquisition at FATA University



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Abstract: *The present research aims to analyze the linguistic competence of L2 ESL learners in the acquisition of English as a second language in the erstwhile FATA region of KP, Pakistan. The primary focus of the study is to highlight the differences in linguistic competence between a group of students who are highly motivated (DMCs) and those who are not. Directed Motivational Currents (DMCs) represent a novel psychological construct in the context of L2 motivation, specifically within applied linguistics, and have recently been introduced in the study of ESL acquisition in KP, Pakistan. The research employed a longitudinal study design, collecting data from students' answer books to evaluate their linguistic competence. Written responses from students during midterm examinations were analyzed at two distinct times. The initial step involved identifying occurrences of various linguistic items and structures relevant to the components of communicative competence. The subsequent step was to identify and categorize the mistakes made by the students. The final step entailed a comparative analysis of these mistakes to assess differences in linguistic competence. The findings reveal that highly motivated students demonstrate superior linguistic competence compared to their less motivated peers. The analysis indicates that highly motivated students exhibit greater proficiency in utilizing linguistic structures, which contributes to more effective and coherent written Linguistic. This research underscores the significant impact of motivation on the linguistic competence of L2 ESL learners, providing insights into how motivational factors influence language acquisition and proficiency.*

Keywords: Linguistic Competence, Linguistics Analysis; Communicative Competence

Introduction

English language, as an L2 (second language) or foreign language in the L2 Motivation field (Dörnyei, 2005), has become an integral part of modern life (Seargeant, 2012). Crystal (2003) emphasizes that English is used as the global language for international communication. It holds significance as the language of various domains, making it the gateway to modern knowledge and the modern world. English is the language of choice in media, science, politics, research, trade, technology, education, commerce, and industry across the globe

(Graddol, 2010).

Proficiency in English language is typically seen as a mark of prestige, educational attainment, and social maturity. There exists a prevalent belief that an English speaker is an educated individual (Shamim, 2011). English is not only a language taught in educational institutions but is also a means of communication, especially among teenagers in Pakistan. English vocabulary is prominently integrated into conversations conducted in Urdu or Pashto.

Given the significance of the English language

in both global and Pakistani contexts, it is significant to understand L2 learners' motivation, their communicative competence, and their perceptions of learning English. In Pakistan, English is a compulsory subject from nursery to almost graduate levels. It is acquired for various purposes beyond passing exams, including job seeking, improving social and economic standards, and engaging with the global community (Coleman, 2010). Motivational orientations of Pakistani students at different educational levels have been explored by Islam et al. (2013), Ali et al. (2015), Pathan (2010), and others. However, a persistent issue remains i.e. many graduates still lack proficiency in English language usage, despite being motivated, as noted by Shamim and Tribble (2005) and Samad (2015). The present study addresses this significant concern by comparing the communicative competence of motivated students with that of their peers who are less motivated to learn English.

Research Question

1. What are the differences in the communicative competence between the ESL learners who went through DMC periods and those who did not experience such periods in terms of language acquisition?

Literature Review

The concept of motivation, which can be challenging to define (Kleinginna & Kleinginna, 1981), generally refers to the inner desire to undertake a particular action. It has been a central focus of research in the field of applied linguistics for many years. This emphasis on motivation has led to significant advancements in the study of L2 motivation, reaching to the emergence of a novel phenomenon known as Directed Motivational Currents (Henceforth DMC), as described by Dörnyei et al. (2014).

Directed Motivational Currents is a new motivational construct which is related to the different periods of highly motivated behavior in the achievement of a personally significant well defined end goal (Dörnyei, Henry & Muir, 2016). This new construct contains intensive engagement, consistent effort and a positive

impact where a person shows a highly motivated behavior that exceeds normal expectations.

These DMCs are experienced by a majority of individuals in various contexts, particularly in the context of learning a second language, as reported by Muir (2016). Muir (2016) identified instances of DMCs across different parts of the world, explaining this unique phenomenon. Apart from Muir's study, another Ph.D. thesis by Ibrahim in 2016 analyzed the DMC qualitatively, and only a few articles have been published related to DMCs. This suggests that there is still a need for further exploration and analysis of DMCs in various L2 learning contexts (Muir, 2020; Muir & Gümüş, 2020; Xiaolu et al., 2017; Le et. al, 2021 and Jahedizadeh & Al-Hoorie, 2021).

Celce-Murcia (2007) Model of Communicative Competence

Celce-Murcia (2007) revised the previous model of communicative Competence presented by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995). According to her, there were some discrepancies and gaps which have been rectified in this model. This model has been prepared in the context of language teaching activities. She preferred the term formulaic language to the term language as a system. There are six components in this new model of communicative Competence in which the focus of this study is linguistics Competence.

Linguistic Competence: Linguistic Competence in the present model is the understanding and knowledge of syntactic, lexical, phonological, and morphological rules of the second language (Celce-Murcia, 2007).

Material and Methods

The study utilizes a longitudinal research design to examine changes in Linguistic competence over time. A longitudinal design involves gathering data from the same group of individuals across multiple time points to observe and analyze variations, progressions, or stability in specific attributes. In this research, the primary objective is to track and compare the development of students' Linguistic competence over a period. The focus is on a cohort of students experiencing Directed Motivational

Currents (DMCs) in their language learning journey. Data collection occurred at two distinct intervals: initially during the 2nd semester, where the students' written English was analyzed, and again during the 4th semester, a year later. This approach allows for a comparative analysis of changes in students' written English proficiency over the course of a year. Longitudinal studies are particularly valuable for understanding how variables evolve and can offer insights into the long-term effects of experiences like DMCs on individual development and competence. This design is well-suited for investigating the sustained impact of motivation (DMCs) on language learning abilities.

To analyze the students' linguistic competence, a linguistic analysis method was employed. This method, as described by Widdowson (2014), involves a systematic examination of written or spoken Linguistic to highlight various linguistic features, structures, and functions. The goal is to understand how language conveys meaning. Linguistic analysis can encompass multiple approaches, including stylistic analysis, Linguistic analysis, and examination at different levels such as syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and phonological. However, this study does not delve deeply into the structural aspects of language but focuses on linguistic competence by evaluating the frequency of different linguistic items and phrases, using Celce's (2007) model for grammatical cohesion.

Population and Sample

The sample selection process was thorough, involving informal interviews and discussions over six months to assess the students' motivational intensity. Four students, identified as partially experiencing DMCs, had their 2nd-semester papers reviewed for Linguistic

competence. The analysis revealed that specific components of grammatical cohesion could be examined to assess the impact of DMCs on L2 competence. These four students were directly taught by the researcher at the BS level in the university. To facilitate a comparative analysis, three additional students were selected to contrast the linguistic competence of DMC students with non-DMC cases.

All seven students were classmates, L1 Pashto speakers, and shared similar social and cultural backgrounds. Data from their answer books were collected during the 2nd semester and again in the 4th semester to analyze improvements in their communicative competence. The selection of these seven students was based not only on their shared linguistic, social, and cultural backgrounds but also on their comparable CGPA, ensuring a relevant comparison of linguistic competence.

Analysis of the Linguistic Competence

According to Celce-Murcia (2007), Linguistic competence is the understanding and knowledge of syntactic, lexical, phonological and morphological rules of the second language. The focus of this analysis has been delimited to the spellings, subject verb agreement and fragments in terms of Linguistic competence.

In the first place the researcher has checked and encircled the spelling mistakes in the papers of the students. After the identification of spelling mistakes, the researcher has compared and analyzed the papers of BS students during 2nd semester and 4th semester to see the development of understanding towards linguistic competence of students during one year. The following table presents the number of mistakes made by the students in their papers.

Table 1: Occurrence of Linguistic Competence in Students' Papers

Student	Semester 2, Mid Term			Semester 4, Mid Term		
	Spellings	Subject Verb Agreement	Fragments	Spellings	Subject Verb Agreement	Fragments
1	16	7	1	5	2	0
2	27	4	5	8	3	0
3	12	1	0	5	3	0
4	12	2	1	3	1	0
5	16	5	1	14	4	1
6	10	0	0	9	0	2
7	6	0	0	9	9	0

4.14.1 Analysis of Spelling Mistakes

Spelling mistakes are very common mistakes found in the papers of students. As the table above presents, almost all the students have made mistakes of spellings in their papers of 2nd and 4th semesters but the first four students (DMCs) have reduced the number of mistakes than the remaining three students.

Student 1

In the papers of student 1, 21 spelling mistakes were found. Out of these mistakes, 16 were found in paper of 2nd semester while 5 in that of 4th semester. The examples from their papers are given below.

Examples from the 2nd Semester Paper

Tone of an *eassy* (essay) may be solemn, sarcastic and *humrous* (humorous).

For example if we write an *eassy* (essay) on world war II so the tone of the *eassy* (essay) will

Examples from the 4th Semester Paper

The most important and first step in critical thinking is to *analyse* the problem, analyzing the problem mean to identify the problem. By *analysing* the problem we can draw the result.

As the examples above exhibit that the student has shown a significant improvement in terms of spelling mistakes. Student 1 has 16 spelling

mistakes in the paper of 2nd semester while it has reduced to 5 in 4th semester. This signifies that the student has improved his spellings in a year.

Student 2

After checking for spelling mistakes in the papers of student 2, 27 spelling mistakes were found in the paper of 2nd semester while the paper of the 4th semester had 8 spelling mistakes.

Examples from the 2nd Semester Paper

A *writter* (writer) should keep that who is his *Audiens* (audience) and for what *porpuse* (purpose) he saying.

Examples from the 4th Semester Paper

First critical thinkers *analyzes* the statement that is the set of data, information, or entertainment and then they understand the *porpuse* (purpose) of the writer.

The analysis of these papers by looking at the examples, it is evident that the student has shown as remarkable improvement in writing correct spellings as the number of mistakes has reduced in 4th semester as compared to 2nd semester.

Student 3

The paper of the Student 3 was checked for the spellings mistakes and it was found that the

students has made 21 spelling mistakes in both the papers, out of which 12 spelling mistakes were found in his 2nd semester paper while 4 mistakes were found in his 4th semester paper.

Examples from the 2nd Semester Paper

For Example: A writer is writing an application to HOD then the tone should be in limit and proper to the *audance* (audience).

Examples from the 4th Semester Paper

Critical thinking can draw fair and *senseble* (sensible) conclusion from a set of information and differentiate between *usefull* (useful) and less *usefull* (useful).

It was found out in the analysis of the papers submitted by student 3 that not only the quality and content of student's writing has improved in the 4th semester as compared to his 2nd semester but also the number of spelling mistakes has also been reduced with the passage of time.

Student 4

After the analysis and comparison of the both the papers submitted by students 4, the researcher found out that there are 12 spelling mistakes in the paper of student 4 in his 2nd semester while only 5 mistake were found in his 4th semester paper.

Examples from the 2nd Semester Paper

Audiance (Audience) is the other factor of *writting* (writing) Essay.

Examples from the 4th Semester Paper

Often you will need to share your conclusion with your employers or with group of *colleagues* (colleagues) you need to be able to communicate with others to share your idea effectively you might also need to *ingage* (engage) in critical thinking with a group.

The comparison of both the papers highlights that the students has focused on the spilling errors and has enhanced his language proficiency as the student has reduced the number of mistakes from 2nd to 4th semester. This also shows the students' interest in learning from his past mistakes.

Student 5

Students 5 has made 16 mistakes of spelling in his 2nd semester paper while he has not shown any improvement till the 4th semester as he has made 14 mistakes of spelling in his 4th semester paper.

Examples from the 2nd Semester Paper

The *audience* (audience) is important for you Because the *audience* (audience) read your essay and that *thay* (they) get *intrest* (interest) then you success in your *openion* (opinion).

Examples from the 4th Semester Paper

Oftan you will need to share your conclusion with your employer or a group of *colleages* (colleagues) you need to be able to *communicated* with other to share your ideas affectively you might also need to engage in critical thinking with a group.

This time, the comparison of both the 2nd and 4th semester papers shows that the student has not focused on his spellings and he retains the number of mistakes in both the papers. There is no improvement in the writing correct spelling in this connection.

Student 6

The analysis of the papers of student 6 shows that he has made 4 spelling mistakes in his papers. Out of these mistakes, 1 was found in paper of 2nd semester while 3 mistakes were there in his 4th semester paper.

Examples from the 2nd Semester Paper

Writer should use *revelevant* (relevant) terminology to achieve his tone.

Examples from the 4th Semester Paper

The analysis and *evolution* (evaluation) of an ideas or information in order to reach the judgments and conclusions.

People with analytical skill can *examin* (examine) the information and understand what it mean and what it represents.

To think critically you have to put aside any assumption, only analyze what you *recieve* (receive).

By closely examining the papers of student 6, it has been observed that the number of spelling mistakes has increased in 4th semester as compared to 2nd semester. The mistakes pointed out attributed to the fact that there has been negligence on the part of the student. It may be due to the fact that he has performed well in the papers of semester 2 which made him careless in semester 4 and he made more spelling mistakes.

Student 7

Upon examining and comparing both the papers of student 7, it was found out that 16 spelling mistakes were found. 9 mistakes occurred in the paper of 4th semester while 6 spelling mistakes were found in the paper of 2nd semester.

Examples from the 4th Semester Paper

Good critical thinkers can draw fair and sensible conclusion from information and *differentiat* between *usefull* and less *usefull* (useful) details to make a *dicision* or to solve a problem.

Once again just like student 6, this student has shown no improvement in the course of time and has repeated the mistakes.

4.14.2 Subject Verb Agreement:

According to Nicol et al (1997), it is a kind of syntactic agreement in which the subject and verb of a structure agree in terms of number. In order to write a syntactically correct text, there must be no mistake in terms of subject verb agreement. The papers of students were thoroughly checked for subject verb agreement and the following observations were made by the researcher.

Student 1

The analysis of the papers of the student 1 exhibits that there are 9 mistakes in connection to the subject verb agreement mistakes. Out of these 9 mistakes, 7 were found in paper of 2nd semester paper while 2 in the 4th semester paper.

Examples from the 2nd Semester Paper

There are main three *factor* (factors) which are necessary for writing an eassy.

Examples from the 4th Semester Paper

Creativity *mean* (means) to invent something

new, means ideas.

Student 2 has mad 7 subject verb agreement mistakes in the paper of 2nd semester while these mistakes have been decreased to 2 in the 4th semester. The significant point is the reduction of mistakes in the subject verb agreement which shows that the student has taken more interest in refining his language skills and has become more accurate in terms of writing skills.

Student 2

The analysis of the papers of the students 2 highlights that the student has produced 4 mistakes in the paper of 2nd semester and 3 mistakes in the paper of 4th semester.

Examples from the 2nd Semester Paper

Three main *factor* (factors) keep in mind for a writer or Auther

Examples from the 4th Semester Paper

Critical thinker looks the writing and after that they *judges* (judge) that what type of statement is that.

It can be seen that the student has shown some improvement in 4th semester as compared to 2nd semester. Although this time the improvement is very slight and it might be the case the students has not improved this particular aspect i.e. subject verb agreement of the language but still the reduction in the number of mistakes shows somehow an improvement.

Student 3

The number of subject verb agreement mistakes found in the paper of student 3 is 4. 1 mistake is observed in the paper of 2nd semester while 3 in the paper of 4th semester.

Examples from the 2nd Semester Paper

The writer *use*(uses) best terminology to achieve tone.

Examples from the 4th Semester Paper

Problem solving is another important critical thinking *skills* (skill) that involves analyzing a problem generating a solution and judging the success of the plan.

From the analysis of the papers, it has been observed that though the number of occurrences

of subject verb agreement has increased during 4th semester as compared to 2nd semester but the content and quality have remarkably been improved. Besides, word limit has also increased, so the increase is notable and the overall quality has been improved.

Student 4

The analysis of the papers of the students 4 shows that 3 mistakes of subject verb agreement are found in the papers of student 4. 2 mistakes are there in the paper of 2nd semester while only 1 mistake is there in the paper of 4th semester.

Examples from the 2nd Semester Paper

Tone *show* (shows) the attitude of the authors.

Examples from the 4th Semester Paper

Critical thinking *involve* (involves) to judge the sources such as data, facts and research finding.

Referring to the number of instances observed, it has been found that the student has shown improvement during semester 4 as compared to semester 2 because the students has produced more correct and mature structures in 4th semester and the number of mistakes have slightly been reduced.

Student 5

There are 5 instances in the paper of semester 2 of student 5 that has problems of subject verb agreement while it has been reduced to 4 during semester 4.

Examples from the 2nd Semester Paper

The *audience* is important for you Because the *audience* read your essay and that *thay* get intrest then you success in your openion.

Examples from the 4th Semester Paper

“If critical *thinking skills* is a key phrase in job listing *you* are applying for, be sure to give special attention to *your* critical thinking skills throughout your job search.”

From the above examples, it can be seen that the student has no understanding of sentence structure and the same mistakes have been repeated by him in both the 2nd and 4th semesters.

Students 6 & 7

The analysis and comparison of the both these students resulted that both the students have made the subject verb agreement mistakes in the 2nd as well as in the 4th semester. The examples given below from their 4th semester papers illustrate the mistakes.

Examples from the 4th Semester Paper

People with analytical skill can examin the information and understand what *it mean* (means) and what it represents.

Problem solving is another important critical thinking *skills* (skill) that involves to analyze a problem, to generate a solution, and to judge the success of the plan.

From the above example it can be seen that the students have no understanding of the subject verb agreement even in their 4th semester. Thus, no remarkable change has been perceived in this connection.

4.14.3 Analysis of Fragments

According to Quibol-Catabay (2016), a phrase without a complete thought though it contains a subject and a verb is called fragment. The analysis of the mistakes related to fragments observed in the papers of students is given below where the researcher has highlighted the mistakes by writing these mistakes in bold letters and the correct structures are not given.

Student 1

There was 1 fragment observed in the paper of student 1 in 2nd semester while there was no fragment found in the 4th semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

Critical thinking able us to find (?) easily by evaluating the given information.

This shows that the student is quite aware of mistakes in connection to fragments even in the 2nd semester and just missed the noun phrase while in 4th semester he has not produced any such mistake.

Student 2

After the analysis and comparison on the papers of 2nd and 4th semester, the researcher found that

the student has made 7 mistakes in total, in which the 2nd semester's paper contains 5 mistakes while the 4th semester's paper contains 0 mistakes in terms of fragments. The example from the second semester is given below.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

To make others on your way. Its means what you saying the other release that you are correct.

The analysis shows that the students has shown improvement with the passage of time and in the 4th semester, he has understood how to write complete sentences and avoiding fragments.

Student 3

This time when the papers of the students 3 has checked and analyzed for the mistakes of fragments, the researcher found out that the student has made no mistakes in his papers. Hence the analysis shows that the students has already a good understanding of fragments and sentences.

Student 4

Focusing the analysis of the papers of 2nd and 4th semesters by students 4, the researcher discovered that the student has made only 1 mistake of sentence fragments in his 2nd semester while there is no mistake in the 4th semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

Purpose is that for what purpose you write essay in purpose to make a people persuade, intertain and (?)

The case of student 4 is different from student 3 as he has not made any mistakes of fragments in his 4th semester while there was only one mistake in his 2nd semester which shows that the students has become conscious in this regard and has developed the understudying of writing.

Student 5

Students 5 has made only one mistake of fragment in his 2nd semester while there is no mistake of fragment in 4th semester.

Example from the 2nd Semester Paper

In important factor. The auidance you should determing that important factor of you is

auidance. You will read any essay it.

In this case, although not a DMC case, the student has shown improvement and has developed the understanding in this connection.

Students 6 and 7

The fragments in the papers of student 6 and 7 are very less. Only two instances of fragments were found in the paper of 4th semester of student 6 while fragments were not found in the papers of student 7.

Example from the 4th Semester Paper

The ability to solve an important problem. It is the most important and crucial skill that involves to find out the solution by generating and implementation.

The increase in instances of fragment from 0 to 2 shows that student 6, instead of showing improvement, has assumed himself to be perfect in writing skills, which ultimately resulted in his self-confidence. This leads him towards carelessness during 4th semester, thus committing mistakes.

Conclusion

The analysis of learners' Linguistic competence reveals that highly motivated individuals exhibit significantly greater development in both grammatical and Linguistic competence compared to their less motivated peers. This suggests that periods of intense motivation notably enhance learning capacity, allowing learners to substantially improve their communicative skills during such Directed Motivational Currents (DMCs). These results align with the findings of Henry et al. (2015), Muir and Dörnyei (2013), and Dörnyei et al. (2014), who observed that individuals immersed in DMCs achieve superior performance and greater learning success compared to those with lower levels of motivation.

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