

Communication Disorders due to Lingo-Cultural

Diversity

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Abstract

The term disordered or impaired communication refers to that specific type of communication, which deviates from the established communication manners, set in a society. It is a special type of communication disorder which is observed among different types of cultural groups in educational institutions. This study aims to highlight the communication disorder, that is not due to any biological factor, but due to lingo-cultural diversity between the students. It examines the influence of cultural norms on communication behavior of students, which leads to communication gap among them. To test the hypothesis survey in three different universities of Lahore was conducted. A very careful selection of the participants was made on the basis of information about their backgrounds. Findings show that rural and urban students fail to accept as well as respect this lingo-cultural difference between them. Though a very strong tie between language and culture exists, and students find difficulty in communication, they can cover the communication gap after a conscious and consistent efforts from both sides.

Key Words: *Communication Disorders, Lingo-cultural Diversity, Linguistic features, Paralinguistic features.*

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Introduction

In universities, students from different lingo-cultural groups come across each other. A specific type of communication gap is noted, which is only due to cultural diversity. 'Diversity means that people who are different will interact with each other with outcomes that are not always easy to predict' Trickett, et al. (1994, p. 39). Different types of linguistic and paralinguistic features are reflected in the communication patterns, preferences, styles and approaches of people belonging to divergent cultural backgrounds. For example, the students with purely rural background and the students with urban background fail to produce effective communication with each other when they come across each other. Both types of the students have been brought up in different environment, by different types of parents, with different types of cultural as well as moral values and above all with different communication manners.

In this way we may say that what may be contemplated dysfunctional in one language will not necessarily be so in another language. Argyle (1983), in his book, *'The Psychology of Interpersonal Behaviour'* has described eight extents of non-verbal communication. These include 'facial expressions, gaze, gestures, bodily postures, bodily contact, special behavior, clothes and appearance and non-verbal aspects of speech' (Byram, 1997, p. 13).

The students from the villages live a very simple life according to the culture of their own community. Their parents are less educated than the parents of urban students. They communicate with their children according to their own sets of rules. They are loud and noisy and express their feelings through the voice level.

The pitch of voice of the villagers specially, of their women is very high. When they call someone, they call very loudly to be sure that their message has been conveyed to the listener. The use of abusive language is their connotation. They use abusive language not only when they are angry but even when they are sitting among their friends. They pass vulgar remarks on each other and enjoy. This type of communication is a social taboo for the urban who although use abusive language but it is to express their feelings of anger and to demonstrate their power over the other. Moreover, the rural people have humorous element as an integrated part of their communication. They are very fond of passing "*jugats*" means humorous comparison and remarks in their communication. The rural students exhibit rural culture in their communication and that is why, being aware of these characteristics, feel shy and hesitate in taking part in communication with the urban students as well as with the teachers. They sit silent in the class and do not take active part in class discussions.

Education aims to produce better human beings who are civilized and well-mannered in all aspects of life. The children of the educated urban learn the traits of civilization from their parents and become like their parents eventually. Moreover, these students get education in good renowned private schools where English is the medium of education. They have the opportunity to come across western culture through the books they read at schools. They watch English movies and other programmes in their routine life. All these blessings play a very significant role in the development of their personality. They are brought up with love and care in such a way

that they are pampered everywhere either it is their home or it is their school. On the other hand the rural students are mostly educated in Government institutions where they are trained rather drilled by "*danda culture*"; use of a stick in observance of rules and good behavior.

What is Cultural Diversity?

Cultural traits are seen equally active in the very beginning of the process of language acquisition, since cultural norms are integral part of a language. For example, a child not only acquires the phonological system of his mother tongue, along with that he acquires paralinguistic features of that language simultaneously in the natural setting. Moreover, there are other certain features such as manners of communication, set by every cultural group are also expected from the children to be acquired intentionally as well as emphatically. There are different values and taboos in the field of language acquisition determined by the people of that particular culture. The link between communication and culture is very deep because cultural norms are followed by each community and their children learn language in the context of their family. In this way, their communication style is different from the communication style of other family. There is a vigorous synergy among cultural values, ethical beliefs, family expectations and experiences, and child rearing. All these factors play a vital role in development of young children. Cultural competence is a highly systematic function. Betancourt et al., (2003) suggested that cross cultural adaptability depends upon cultural competence, which is possible after appropriate understanding of people from other cultures.

Paralinguistic Features

It is important to mention that communication in the second language such as in English is the problem area for these students. They speak differently even their native languages; Urdu and Punjabi with each other. They fail to follow the explicit and implicit meanings lie in their communication with each other. They fail to follow the explicit and implicit meanings lie in their communication with each other. Not only their linguistic features are different but their paralinguistic features are also quite different from each other. There are multiple means of communication, such as verbal or non-verbal, formal or informal, oral or written, intentional or unintentional, etc. In all the forms, the major aim of communication is thought to transmit a message from a speaker to the listener. In intercultural communication, the most commonly found decoding error is due to ethnocentrism. This is 'the tendency to interpret and evaluate others' behavior using our own standards' (Gudykunst, 1991, p. 66).

Human beings are possessed with an ability to use various symbols, which carry different thoughts and ideas. There are certain types of signs, symbols, gestures and styles, which are used to convey a variety of messages. 'This is due to the reason that knowledge of strategic communication - multiculturalism and cultural nuances, derived from specific cultural values, norms, etc. Human beings are possessed with an ability to use various symbols, which carry different thoughts and ideas. There are certain types of signs, symbols, gestures and styles, which are used to convey a

variety of messages. 'This is due to the reason that knowledge of strategic communication - multiculturalism and cultural nuances, derived from specific cultural values, norms, etc. Business reasons are a prerequisite for avoiding conflicts and misunderstandings are possible, the working environment, resulting in different cultural contexts that offer different possibilities to grasp them and react with one another' (Matsumoto et al, 2005, p. 91). It is important to note that the words are not the only component of a message. Other components include body language, expressions, tone and volume, pauses and silence, etc. At the pragmatics level of study of meaning, all the utterances, words, phrases, clauses, and sentences are interpreted with reference to their contexts and situations.

There is diversity not only in linguistic but in paralinguistic features as well, which includes use of pitch, volume and intonation according to the culturally determined sets of rules. There is a possible range of meanings in every sound uttered by people, sometimes tends to be more effective than the words we use. Just as the meaning of a word varies with its context, the meaning of a phrase or sentence may also vary with the situation. Culture of a community not only determines its linguistic features but the paralinguistic features, such as use of pitch, volume and intonation are also shaped by cultural standards. Every sound of voice has a possible range of meanings that could be conveyed simply through the voice rather than the words we use. Communication process incorporates the following elements, which are considered responsible in creation of lingo-cultural diversity:

- Loud or soft volume of our speech,

- Pleasant or unpleasant effects of our speech,
- The qualities of highness and lowness in our voice, when we speak,
- The speed at which we speak.

Disordered Language

People use a well-organized system of speech sounds to interact with each other, this system is termed as language. There are different factors involved in production of disordered communication. According to Durant (2010), 'language systems and speaking behaviors bind communities and shape social life and communication'. These include psychological inhibition, comprehension disability as well as the receptive problem, which is interpreted as a difficulty in perception of speech sounds. It can also be due to an expressive problem, that is, a difficulty in producing the speech sounds that follow the arbitrary rules of a specific language. Voice disorders are due to some biological problems. They can be due to any reason such as physiological disorders of speech organs such as the larynx, lungs, vocal chords, and the nasal track, etc. Voicing habits developed in an improper way are also responsible in creation of voice disorders. However, in different cultures they are rendered heterogeneously. For instance in a country like Pakistan, paralinguistic features determine the qualities of masculinity and femininity. Men are directed to speak louder in an emphatic manner, otherwise they would be dishonored and censured by their community members. In our rural areas specially, people like to speak in a high volume as compared to the urban people. They are frowned upon and called upon to "speak like a

man” .

Normal language

According to Crystal (1992), Normal language, which develops over a period is both consecutive as well as well organized. Children get mastery over articulation of the speech system (phonology), which is composed of vowels, consonants and then prosodies. This acquisition is in recognizable stages that entail acquisition of form, content, and use. Other essential elements of natural language are syntax and morphology, which are mastered in different stages of language acquisition gradually in conscious as well as unconscious efforts made by children. Semantics and pragmatics are assimilated later on. They learn vocabulary as well as metaphorical expressions. The art to convey explicit and implicit meanings by using simple as well as metaphorical expressions is also learned by them within the context of their cultural settings.

Scotton describes that ‘each linguistic variety contains more than one attributes’ (1976, p.937). Hence communication disorders based on lingo-cultural diversity are not due to expression but they are due to perception mostly, when communicative agents belonging to different groups come in contact with each other. The use of speech sounds, gestures, body language of one group are testified on the basis of the arbitrary linguistic as well as para linguistic rules of another group, and hence this diversity is eventually regarded as a communication disorder between two communities. For instance, the lack of communication manners exhibited by one type is considered a communication

disorder by the other type.

Talking out of turn, not talking when it is your turn, or not responding when you are expected to, could be disorders if frequently observed in one's language behaviour. The process of cultural adaptation is not only time taking, but it requires a conscious effort and psychological motivation on the part of people who interact with culturally different people. On the other hand there is communication failure between both types of people, when they feel that it is the most difficult process to have inter-cultural interactions (Gass & Varonis, 1991; Gumpers & Tannen, 1979).

The Co-operative Principle

In social science generally and linguistics specifically, the cooperative principle describes how people interact with one another. As phrased by Paul Grice, who introduced it as, 'Make your contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged' (Goldberg, 2013). Grice presented his principle of communication, which was termed as four maxims; maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relation and maxim of manner (Grice, 1975, p. 47). Though phrased as a prescriptive command, the principle is intended as a description of how people normally behave in conversation. The maxim of quantity focuses on being more and more informative, the maxim of quality considers the quality of being truthful, the maxim of relation is concerned about being relevant and the maxim of manner tells about being orderly and avoid obscurity. Effective communication between listeners and speakers occurs only when both of them cooperate

each other and accept each other's role in an organized manner by taking turns. The cooperative principle describes how effective communication in conversation is achieved in common social situations.

The cooperative principle can be divided into four maxims, called the Gricean maxims, describing specific rational principles observed by people who obey the cooperative principle; these principles enable effective communication. Grice proposed four conversational maxims that arise from the pragmatics of natural language. The Gricean Maxims are a way to explain the link between utterances and what is understood from them. Grice's maxims present ideal situation of communication, where everything is up to the mark. These maxims are neither about socio-cultural norms of communication, nor do they exhibit moral and ethical considerations of a group of people. 'Paul Grice developed a conception of meaning, which though tied to use, enforced a distinction between what linguistic expression mean and what speakers mean in using them' (Bach, 2003, p. 147).

Method

To test the hypothesis of this study, the method of filling a questionnaire, containing ten questions with 'yes' and 'no' options along with 'comments' was used by the researcher. Different areas of diversity in communication were applied in construction of the questionnaire. The total number of the students who participated in the process of interview was thirty. They were selected from three universities; University of the Punjab Lahore, University of Central Punjab Lahore and University of Management and Technology

Lahore. The urban class of students represented Category 1, whereas the rural class of students represented Category 2 in the figures. The selection of the students was made very carefully on the basis that the students with urban background were those who have been living in the big cities such as Lahore since their childhood and who have received their education from elite educational institutions. On the other hand, the students with rural background were selected after getting information about their areas which must be rural as well as backward. No student from a mix type of rural-urban background was selected for the process of interview.

Findings

The data is analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The response of the students to different types of questions was checked. It is mentioned already that the purpose of questions was not only to get answers to the questions but also to explore their feelings, ideas and knowledge in different areas of communication competence.

1. Who are less careful of communication manners?

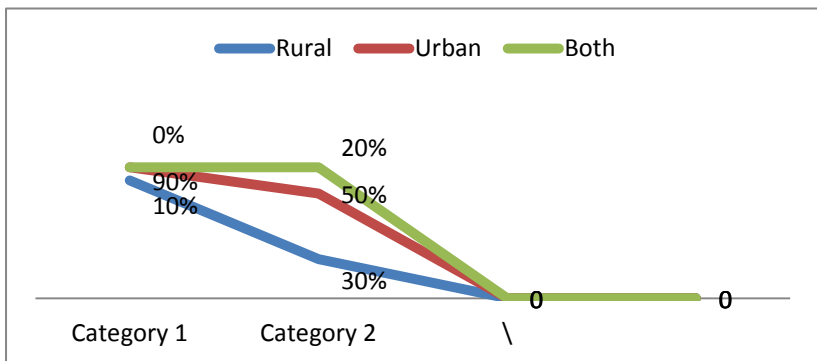


Figure 1: The Quantitative Analysis: Communication Manners

Knowledge, education in good institutions, media, technology and

medium of instructions; English in their educational institutions plays a vital role in making the urban students civilized in their lingo-cultural manners. These students are also influenced by the European and American cultures through media as well as English literature which they come across during their school life. They adopt their cultural traits naturally because culture has a tendency to penetrate from one culture to another. On the other hand, the rural students are brought up in a pretty open and mannerism free environment. Rural students have communication manners according to their own lifestyle which is not acceptable by urban students who ridicule them.

2. Who are more loud and noisy?

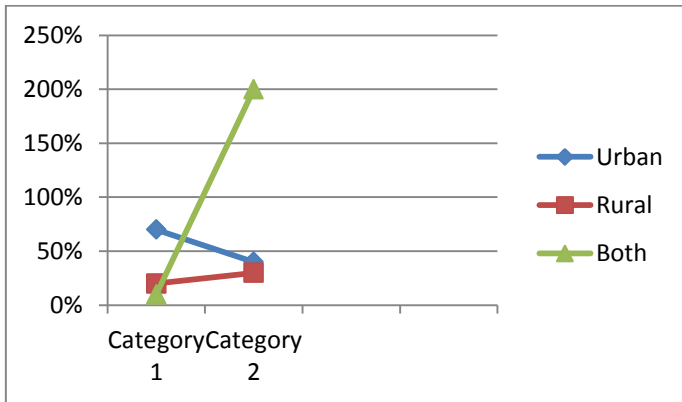


Figure 2: The quantitative Analysis: Loud and Noisy

It is a part of the culture of the rural students to be loud and noisy. They are brought up in a community where people speak more and speak loudly. They express their feelings of happiness as well as of anger by being loud. They call someone's full name and call very loudly with high pitch of voice. It seems that being loud is an

effective way of communication. Being loud assures them that they have conveyed their message. On the other hand, the urban people hate noises. The term 'Noise Pollution' is a product of urban society. They are engaged more in mental work but the rural are engaged more in physical labour. The urban suffer a greater degree of anxiety, mental tension and stress. They cannot tolerate noisy atmosphere. Their children learn these traits during their process of language acquisition. They speak more gently and use the apologetic terms such as 'excuse me'.

3. Who have an element of humor in their communication?

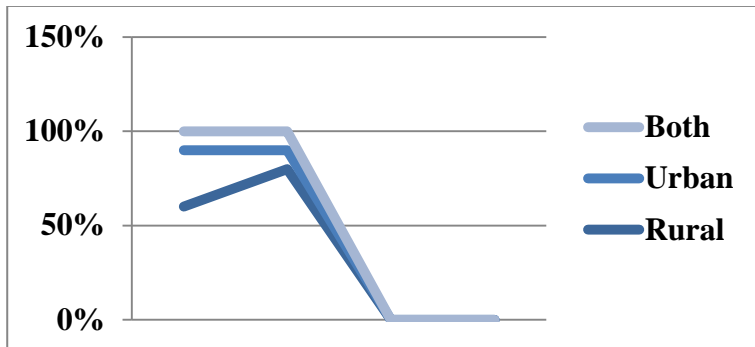


Figure 3: The quantitative Analysis: Element of Humour in Communication

Humor is a cultural trait in the rural life. They celebrate their events of happiness by calling comedians called 'marasees'. They use cheap and vulgar language to make the people laugh. This element unconsciously penetrates in the communication of the rural students. They share unethical jokes with their friends which are social taboos in urban community. Moreover, they are simple and

they talk spontaneously. Their natural style sometimes gives a humorous touch to their communication. On the other hand, the urban students have good sense of humour and pass witty remarks on each other which exhibit their intelligence and educational traits.

4. Who tend to be more hypo critic in their communication?

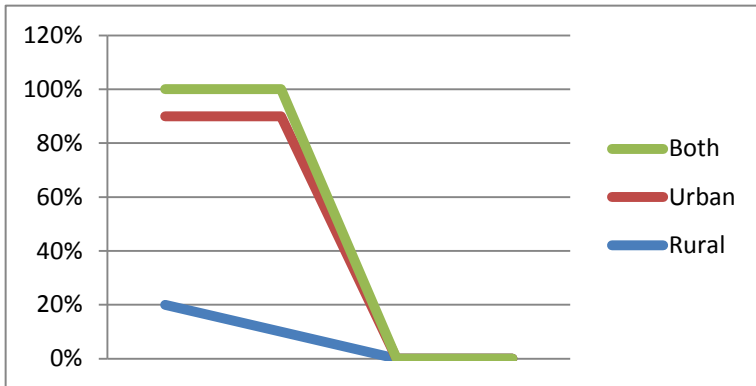


Figure 4: The quantitative Analysis: Hypo critic in Communication

The rural people lead simple life and do not try to conceal facts. They communicate in a straightforward manner. They are pure in their feelings of happiness, sadness and anger etc. Hypocrisy is an outcome of clever and manipulative nature and rural are not as smart as urban.

They try to show off every time and try to impress others by exhibiting a snobbish behavior. They tend to speak sweet words with everyone even if they do not like the others unlike the rural who are simple and honest and fail to communicate in adverse situations. When they are involved with the students of different background and due to their simplicity fail to communicate

effectively in adverse situations are thought to be with communication disorders.

5. Who use greater degree of abusive language?

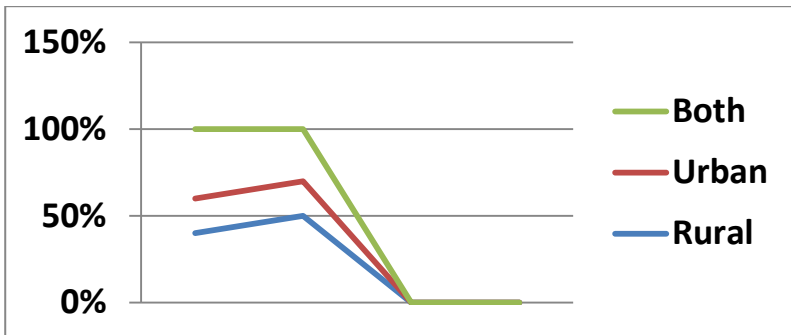


Figure 5: The quantitative Analysis: Use of Abusive Language

The response of the students to this question was very interesting as both categories put forward their ideas in a different way. According to some students, the use of abusive language is a sign of power and authority. It is a part of police culture. It is also a part of institution of army. The urban students use greater degree of abusive language. But to cut a line of distinction between rural and urban the majority was agree that in our villages, people use vulgar language in their daily routine life. They abuse each other not only to express their feelings of anger but they do so even when they are happy. It is interesting that when for the first time their male child abuse someone, they feel happy and proud and comment, “Yeh merd ka bachcha hai” means he is a son of MAN! On the other hand the urban community does not encourage their children if somehow they find them using vulgar language. The students, who were in favour of the answer; “Both” remarked that both types of students

in the university use abusive language. The difference is that the urban think that it is a sign of power but the rural use it as a part of their culture.

6. Who tend to be more open-minded?

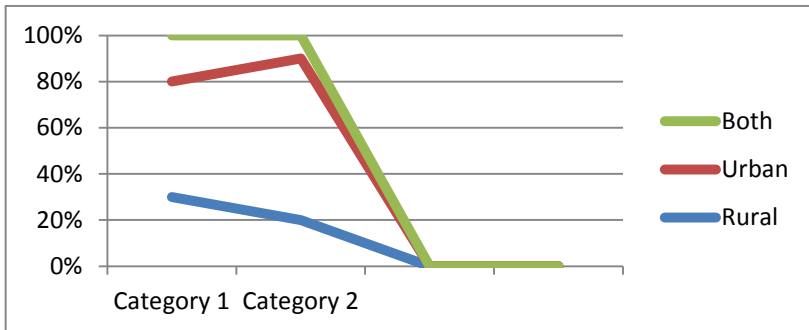


Figure 6: The quantitative Analysis: Open Mindedness

Both types of the participants were of the opinion that the urban students are more open-minded. The rural community is more rigid and conservative than the urban community. The major reason behind it is that the rural people live in an individualistic culture, while the urban people live in collectivist culture. In an individualistic culture where people are free to speak their minds, communication can be precise and direct without having to worry too much about consequences. Unless a person intends to deceive, he will as a rule say what he means and mean what he says. Where the situation calls for greater sensitivity, euphemism and diplomatic expressions may be used, but the wording of a message still reflects its meaning. Only occasionally will people use unspoken or ambivalent messages.

In a collectivist culture, people spend a lot of energy maintaining group harmony by up keeping each other's face. A

careless word may be interpreted as an insult in the wrong ears, which may lead to undesirable consequences. Only a few generations ago, such mistakes could even be fatal. Even where consequences are not as drastic, a person stands to lose a lot of face if he has to take back his words. People need to be very careful of what they communicate. This attitude can be summarized in the Chinese sayings: “Think three times before you speak” and “A gentleman will value his promise as if it is worth a thousand pieces of gold.”

7. Who take an abrupt start in communication?

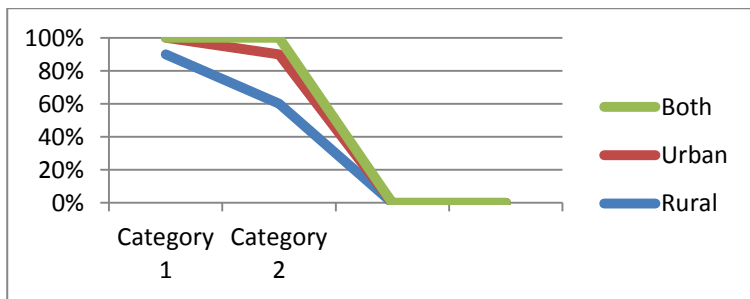


Figure 7: The quantitative Analysis: Abrupt Start in Communication

All the urban students were agreed that the rural students start communication abruptly and this adds humorous element to their communication. They said that in our villages people are less educated and they do not tend to observe communication manners as the people living in the cities do. The students with rural background have this cultural trait in their communication. The second category of the students tried to put the blame of abrupt communication on the urban students by saying that the time has gone when the urban people were more civilized. Now, they are

following Western and American culture in which people are becoming deprived of moral values. Hence these students also start abruptly. Only the difference is that their behavior is more serious and sophisticated than the other type of students who are simple, pure and straight forward.

8. Who tend to be more accommodating about others' actions, reactions and point of view?

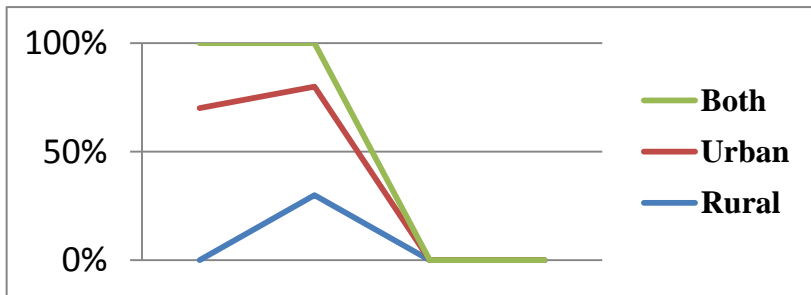


Figure 8: The quantitative Analysis: Accommodating about others' actions, reactions and point of view

Most of the students from both the categories gave their remarks in favour of the urban students. They gave the reason that due to the fact that the urban students have more mobility, they have more chances of interaction with different people and through media and internet they come across different people in their routine life than the rural students. On the other hand the rural students have less chances of meeting different people so they tend to think about others from their own angle. They accept new things with difficulty and pass remarks on the urban students made from their own point of view.

9. Who are more sensitive in realization of lingo-cultural diversity among them?

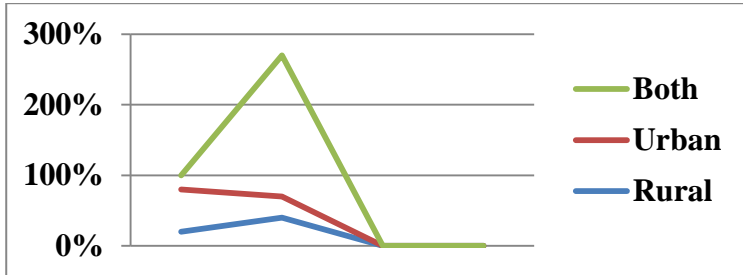


Figure 9: The quantitative Analysis: Sensitivity about Lingo-Cultural Diversity

A mixed type of response was got for this question. The students when asked to make their comments, wrote that it is according to the human nature. They added that the rural students sit silently in the class for the most of time but it does not mean that they give value to the urban students. There is an unseen boundary always present between both types of students. The rural think that the urban students misbehave, are snobbish and they lack ethics, they look down upon the students from rural side. They have forgotten their real culture that can be got by coming near to their soil. On the other hand the urban students may be very fluent and competent in speaking English but they are not good listeners, which is an integrated element of linguistic competence. Whenever the rural students put forward their views, the rural students interrupt again and again which shows that they are not sensitive to the importance of differences.

10. Who show more deferential about others' feelings and emotions?

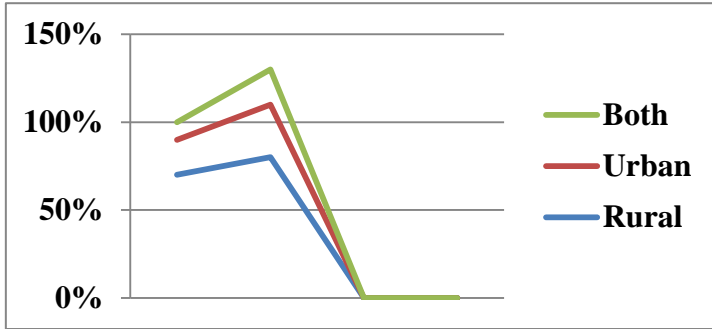


Figure 10: The quantitative Analysis: Differential about others' Feelings and Emotions

Both categories of the students agreed on the fact that the rural students show more differential about others' feelings and emotions. They gave different logical remarks. The Urban students wrote that the rural want to be modern, they conceal their identity of being rural and they try to adopt the life style of the urban students. They try to copy the communication manners of the urban students. On the hand the urban students who were born with a golden spoon in their mouth, who have enjoyed all the facilities of life and whose communication manners are acceptable by the society do not show any interest in the rural students. They least care of their emotions because the life style in the cities is such that everybody is living alone. Even the next door neighbors do not know each other. Some students from category 1 added an example

which is interesting as well as realistic. They said that the rural students adjust themselves easily in the life style of the cities and feel very happy to be settled in the cities. On the other hand, if the urban students have to leave city and live in a rural area, they will not be able to adjust themselves there. So same is the case with communication manners, the rural want to fuse in the urban students but the urban students can never be rural like. Both types live in their own quite different circles and do not try to understand each other's emotions. They do not give value to what others say. Whenever they find the rural students involved in discussion in classroom, they make jokes of them and try to interrupt again and again. They behave like over confident people specially, in the presence of the rural students. They do not respect their ideas simply because they have come from rural areas. On the other hand, the rural students are no doubt simple in nature and do not know tactics but they do not think themselves inferior than the urban students. They have learnt discipline and the lessons of morality with the help of power "*danda culture*" so whenever they find that the urban students are misbehaving with them, they say, "*shokha ban reha hay do kan per parein gi to theek ho jai ga*" means "he will be all right if he is beaten up".

Discussion

This study has added a new dimension to know the differences in the use of language by the students with two different lingo-cultural background; rural and urban. These two different types of students no doubt, use the same language yet the paralinguistic features

used by both types make their communication difficult to be understood by the other. Their voice tone, their response to different ideas, their manner of communication, quality of voice, level of confidence, pitch of voice, the degree of curiosity etc., were quite different from each other. The theory of Intercultural Communication was also applied in diagnosing the areas of difference between them. This theory discusses valued rules, norms, sense of identity, empathy for others, effectiveness of communication, communication manners, open mindedness toward each other, self-confidence, understanding each other's emotions as well as emotions and individual's strengths and weaknesses.

Culture has a heavy overlay on the perceptions and the subsequent handling of the students with communication disorders. These students in spite of the fact that they have no biological problem are considered to be suffering from communication disorder by the other type. They simply say, "Look! He has no communication manners or he does not know how to talk to someone." The urban students comment about the rural students "*paindoos*" means ill-mannered and the rural may comment the urban as "*shokha*" which means snobbish.

Conclusion

When we talk about a cultural group, we are not just talking about an ethnic group of people who speak a different language or come from another area. A cultural group is any group in a society with a distinctive ways of life including lingo-cultural norms which vary from culture to culture and make it difficult to be involved under

the process of effective communication. It is not just the distinctive culture of each group that forms the culture of a place, but also the way these groups relate to each other. It means that when different people come across each other, they react in a strange manner and on their own part think that the other do not know 'how to communicate?' In the Pakistani context, the urban students use a common term 'paindoos' which means ill-mannered, to describe the rural students. They consider themselves superior to 'paindoos' and do not like to make them friends. The other side; the rural students, proud of being landlords, are not ready to consider the urban students superior and when they are annoyed by them, they comment the urban students as 'shokha' which means snobbish.

If we look at the purpose of communication, we will find that it allows people or groups to better understand each other and connect. Communication is the means in which information is disseminated. But the purpose does not end here; it is also the transduction of emotions and or thoughts from one to another. It is to intentionally create harmony or dissonance with the sender and receiver. It links people who believe in a common cause, together with a view to strengthen their relationships. But the students from different cultural background suffer from the inability to communicate as effectively and efficiently as desired. Their communication surely suffers from communication disorder, ranging from mild to severe. Their four language skills – listening, writing, reading, speaking – are affected depending on the disorder due to ling-cultural norms that they have acquired during their process of language acquisition, leading to negative labels.

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