Role of implicit translation in Second Language Acquisition: A phenomenological study of Urdu-English bilinguals

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The study hypothesizes that less proficient Urdu-English bilinguals accomplish their second language processing (both in speech and writing) by implicitly translating from Urdu into English. The phenomenon of implicit translation in bilinguals has already been investigated using ERP (event-related potentials) priming paradigm (Thierry and Wu, 2007; Wu and Thierry, 2010; Holzen and Mani, 2014). The current study set out to explore the same phenomenon qualitatively using phenomenological paradigm of asking the participants about how they experienced the phenomenon, that is, if there was a role of implicit translation in their second language processing or not and if so, in what terms they defined the role of implicit translation for themselves in their use of the second language, English, and also if there was an increase or decrease in implicit translation with their developing second language proficiency. For this purpose, the data was collected from 15 less proficient and 15 highly proficient Urdu-English bilinguals. Both the groups were further divided into 3 sub-groups of 5 each for 3 different phenomenological methods of data collection, namely: semi-structured life-world interviews, focus group discussions, and essay writing. The analysis of data revealed that the participants experienced a facilitation effect of implicit translation in their second language processing. The highly proficient bilinguals considered the phenomenon an essential tool which helped them acquire proficiency in a second language.

Keywords: implicit translation, experience., phenomenology.