

Self-awareness and Inner Speech

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Abstract

The relationship of self-awareness and Inner speech was investigated in the current study by administering Self-Talk Scale and Self-reflection and Insight Scale to four hundred participants (N=400) consisted of both genders (males, 225; females, 175), with the age limit of 20-40 years. The sample was taken from International Islamic University, Islamabad and University of Peshawar, Pakistan. The data was analyzed by applying linear regression analysis. It was predicted that self-awareness and the frequency of inner speech would be positively related with each other. It was also predicted that self-reflection would be positively related to the frequency of inner speech whereas insight would be negatively related to the frequency of inner speech. The findings of the study showed that self-awareness was positively related to the frequency of inner speech as predicted. Self-reflection was found to be positively related to the frequency of inner speech and insight was negatively related to the frequency of inner speech as expected.

Keywords: Self-talk, Self-consciousness, Mindfulness, Self-reflection, Insight.

Introduction

Duval and Wicklund (1972) defined self awareness as the capacity of becoming the object of one's own attention. Self-awareness can be induced by exposing a person to television cameras (Duval et al., 1972), mirrors (Wicklund & Duval, 1971) or someone's own recorded voice (Ickes et al., 1973). Self-awareness can exist in the form of a state as temporary state of awareness of oneself and it can also exist as a permanent characteristic of a person in the form of a trait. Self-awareness in the form of trait is also referred to as dispositional self-awareness. Dispositional self-awareness represents an individual's innate characteristic or ability to inhabit self-awareness. A self-aware person is not only aware of his present but he or she is also aware of his or her past and future. A person having self awareness is aware of the fact that he or she is different and separate individual from others.

According to Zivin (1979) inner speech is silent talking with oneself. We engage in inner speech most of the time when we are thinking of ourselves and other people or when we reflect on our past, present and future. The frequency of inner speech is not the same as the contents of inner speech. The former represents how less or often we engage in inner speech whereas the later represents the negative and positive contents of our self talk. In other words the frequency of inner speech is not about the contents of inner speech. The current study investigated the frequency of inner speech in relation to self-awareness.

Self-awareness is divided into two components i.e. self-reflection and Insight. These two components represent different aspects of self-awareness. According to Grant et al., (2002) self-reflection is related to the evaluation of one's behavior whereas insight is about the understanding of one's behavior. They suggested that self-reflection and insight can also be viewed as two stages of self-awareness where engaging in self-reflection results in some kind of insight about one's behavior.

When we reflect on ourselves we usually talk to ourselves. Inner speech is the primary vehicle in carrying out self-reflection. The absence of self-reflection in animals is due to the absence of language or inner speech. We judge, evaluate and categorize things through inner speech.

As insight is a form of knowing, it does not seem to be related positively to inner speech. Insight usually happens when the mind is relatively calm. The insight component of self-awareness is also related to mere awareness where one is aware of something i.e. bodily sensations rather than reflecting on it. Insight is not a conscious activity for the most part, rather unconscious processes play a central role and a person becomes aware of the insight as an outcome, which is also true of most creative work. Self reflection, on the other hand, is a conscious process where inner speech plays a central role.

Literature Review

The importance of inner speech in self-awareness has been pointed out by many thinkers. (Popper & Eccles, 1977; Flanagan, 1992; Carruthers, 1996; Simonov, 1999; Briscoe, 2002). Morin (1992, as cited in Morin, 2005) assessed inner speech and self-awareness in French subjects by administering questionnaires and found a positive relationship between the two. Inner speech and self-awareness were also found to be positively related to each other in other studies (Siegrist, 1995; Schneider, 2002; Schneider et al, 2005).

Previous research shows that self-awareness is positively related with inner speech. Most studies were carried out in the west. Self-awareness can vary in different cultures and therefore the current research was aimed at investigating the relationship of inner speech to self-awareness in a different culture i.e. Pakistan. The Self-reflection and Insight aspects of self-awareness are distinct from each other and they were found to be related differently and contrasting ways to other constructs (Lyke, 2009, Grant et al., 2002; Silvia & Phillips, 2011; Harrington & Loffredo, 2011). The present study was carried out to examine the relationship of self-reflection and insight to the frequency of inner speech and it was predicted that these aspects of self-awareness would relate to the frequency of inner speech in opposite ways based on its relation to other constructs in the previous research.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the relationship of inner speech to self-awareness.
2. To investigate the relationship between inner speech and self-reflection.
3. To investigate the relationship between inner speech and insight.

Hypotheses

- 1-The frequency of inner speech is positively related to self-awareness.
- 2-Self-reflection is positively related to the frequency of inner speech.
- 3-Insight is negatively related to the frequency of inner speech.

Method

Sample

The sample of the present study was comprised of 400 subjects (N=400) which include both males (221) and females (179). They were recruited from the University of Peshawar and International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan. The age range of these subjects was 20 to 40 years. The subjects were students enrolled in different programs in the university i.e. BS, Master, MPhil and PhD. The two universities were selected for the collection of data as they represent population from all over Pakistan. University of Peshawar represents the population of the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as students from different parts of the province come here to get education. International Islamic University, Islamabad represents the other three provinces i.e. Punjab, Balochistan and Sindh as students from all these provinces are studying at this University. Data was collected by using convenience sampling method.

Materials

The Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS). (Grant et al., 2002) SRIS was used for the assessment of self-awareness. The instrument is consisted of 20 items, utilizing a 6 point likert scale. The SRIS is further divided into subscales i.e. self-reflection subscale (SRIS-SR) and the Insight subscale (SRIS-IN). Self-reflection assess the evaluation of one's feelings, thoughts and behaviors whereas insight assess the degree of clarity of understanding of one's feelings, thoughts and behaviors. Self-reflection is consisted of 12 items. It is further divided into two closely related facets i.e. engagement in reflection and need for reflection. The internal consistency of SRIS-SR and SRIS-IN are coefficient alpha of .91 and .87 respectively. The test retest reliability for the SRIS-SR is .77 and for SRIS-IN is .78.

Self-Talk Scale (STS). The Self-Talk Scale (Brinthaup et al., 2009) is comprised of 16 items which describes different situations where people might talk to themselves. The scale is further divided into subscales which include self reinforcement, self management, self criticism and social assessment scales. The alpha coefficients for the four subscales are between .79 and .89. The scale is positively related to verbally oriented information processing strategies ($r = .47$) and private self-consciousness ($r = .37$) which shows its congruent validity. All items were completed on 5-Point likert scale.

Procedure

The participants of the study were approached at the University of Peshawar and International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Each subject was briefed about the objectives of the research. After developing rapport, questionnaires were administered i.e. Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS) and Self-Talk Scale (STS) to measure self-awareness and inner speech.

Results

Table 1: Detail of Sample Characteristics for the Study (N = 400)

Sample	Categories	F	%
Gender	Male	221	55.3
	Female	179	44.7
Education	Intermediate	152	38.0
	Graduation	91	22.8
	Master	154	38.5
	Missing	3	0.7
Sample	Mean	SD	Range
Age	24.68	4.83	20-39

Table 1 represents the distribution of total sample on the basis of their gender, education level and age. Results show the precise and comprehensive distribution of sample characteristics under study. Education of respondents is divided into three groups on the basis of completion of educational years.

Table 2: Linear Regression analysis showing the effect of inner speech on the prediction of Self-Awareness scale (SRIS) (N=400)

Model	B	SE	B	T	p-value
Constant	74.37	2.76		26.92	.000
Inner Speech	0.128	.051	0.125	2.51	.013

F (1, 398)=6.29, p <.05, R²=.016

Note: B = Unstandardized Coefficients, β =Standardized Coefficients, SE=Standard Error.

Simple Linear Regression analysis is computed with inner speech as a predictor variable, and self-awareness (SRIS) as an outcome variable. The R² value of .016 specifies that 1.6% of variance in the dependent variable can be accounted for, by the predictor with F = 6.29 and p<.05. The results also specify that inner speech has a significant positive effect on prediction of self-awareness (SRIS).

Table 3: Linear Regression analysis showing the effect of inner speech on the prediction of Self-Reflection, a subscale of Self-Awareness scale (SRIS) (N=400)

Model	B	SE	B	T	p-value
Constant	37.62	2.12		17.75	.000
Inner Speech	0.242	.039	.296	6.17	.000

F (1, 398) = 38.10, p <.001, R²=.087

Note: B = Unstandardized Coefficients, β =Standardized Coefficients, SE=Standard Error.

Linear Regression analysis is computed with inner speech as a predictor variable, and self-reflection subscale of self-awareness (SRIS) as an outcome variable. The R² value of .087 specifies that 8.7% of variance in the dependent variable can be considered for, by the predictor with F=38.10 and p<.0001. The results specify that inner speech has a significant positive effect on prediction of self-reflection subscale of self-awareness (SRIS).

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression analysis showing the effect of inner speech on the prediction of Insight, a subscale of Self-Awareness scale (SRIS) (N=400)

Model	B	SE	B	T	p-value
Constant	36.74	1.61		22.83	.000
Inner Speech	-0.114	.030	-.188	-3.82	.000

F (1, 398)=14.62, p <.001, R²=.035

Note: B=Unstandardized Coefficients, β =Standardized Coefficients, SE=Standard Error.

Linear Regression analysis is computed with inner speech as a predictor variable, and Insight subscale of self-awareness (SRIS) as an outcome variable. The R² value of .035 specifies that 3.5% of variance in the dependent variable can be considered for, by the predictor with F=14.62 and p<.0001. The results also specify that inner speech has a significant negative effect on prediction of insight subscale of self-awareness (SRIS).

Discussion

Results showed that inner speech was positively related to self-awareness. The findings confirmed the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between inner speech and self-awareness. The findings were also consistent with previous research (Morin, 1992, as cited in Morin, 2005; Siegrist, 1995; Schneider, 2002; Schneider et al, 2005).

Self-awareness can only exist when a person has a past as well as future and the existence of past and future are not possible without inner speech. The notion of Self is not only created but also maintained by inner speech. Without inner speech our Selves would dissolve into thin air. This dissolution of Self can be seen in the case of Jill Bolte Talyor(2006) when she experienced a stroke in her left hemisphere of the brain. Without inner speech her sense of Self was not existed anymore.

When an animal is hurt by another animal or human, the hurt feelings seems to be momentary as compared to human adult. Due to the absence of language and inner speech, the animal cannot repeat or rehearse the event again and again but this is not the case with human beings. Due to inner speech, a person will talk to himself repeatedly about a painful event. In this way he or she builds a narrative about that event which becomes part of the Self of that individual.

The results confirmed the hypothesis that self-reflection is positively related to inner speech as inner speech was a significant predictor of self reflection. Self-reflection is thinking about oneself and thought would be very impoverished without words or inner speech. Therefore the capacity for self-reflection is intimately related with inner speech.

Insight was found to be negatively related to inner speech. Insight is not a deliberate process. Great scientists and thinkers usually got insights into a problem when they were not thinking about that problem. Therefore it is sometime suggested that one should distract himself from thinking about a problem in order to have an insight about it. The contrasting relationship of self-reflection and insight to the frequency of inner speech endorse the idea that these two aspects of self-awareness are distinct from each other. The findings of the study are also in accord with previous research which investigated self-reflection and insight in relation to other constructs (Lyke, 2009; Grant et al., 2002; Silvia & Phillips, 2011; Harrington & Loffredo, 2011).

Limitations

The current study has certain limitations. Self-awareness and inner speech were measured through questionnaires and these questionnaires were limited in scope because of the close ended nature of the questions. The present study investigated the relationship of self-awareness to the frequency of inner speech and therefore the findings of the study are not applicable to the contents of inner speech in relation to self-awareness.

Implications and Recommendations

The positive relationship of self awareness to inner speech suggests that reducing the frequency of inner speech would also decrease self-awareness. As self-awareness is positively related to psychological disorders ((Ingram. 1990)) therefore decreasing self-awareness would be conducive to one's mental health. Mindfulness can be one of the ways of reducing the frequency of inner speech as it was found to be negatively related with the frequency of inner speech (Hussain & Shah, 2020). Future research can examine the impact of mindfulness on self-awareness.

Self reflection can lead to insight but too much reflection can be an obstacle to gain insight (Grant et al, 2002).The current study showed that self reflection is positively related to inner speech whereas insight is negatively related to inner speech. Therefore one way to facilitate insight is to reduce the frequency of inner speech or avoid engaging in more inner speech. Research can be carried out to investigate the impact of the frequency of inner speech on insight.

The frequency and contents of inner speech seems to be related as negative thoughts are more intrusive compared to positive thoughts. Therefore both the contents and frequency of inner speech can be studied in relation to each other. We can also study their relation by examining their impact on each other e.g.

reducing or increasing the frequency of inner speech and its impact on the contents of inner speech or the impact of the modification of the contents of inner speech on the frequency of inner speech.

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