

The Study on Bilingualism and its Role in Teaching L2 in Pakistan

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Abstract:

The study explores the significance of bilingualism and its role in teaching a second language (L2) in Pakistan. The study focuses the use of first language (L1) while learning L2 class is an effective way and helps in learning more than one language at a time as it makes the concepts easier to understand. However, it endorses a clarification, particularly focused on the contiguity of bilingualism over time that stands foremost practice in L2 English classes in Pakistan. This is a fact that children learn many languages in their natural environment. The study makes use of both qualitative and quantitative research. The semi-structured interviews and classroom observation were conducted. The data were collected from the secondary schools of Multan region (Punjab, Pakistan). The findings reveal that bilingualism as a great source in teaching aids which makes possible in learning a second language in the classroom. It is also suggested that the teachers and parents should never bother about the use of L1 in school or at home because it does not hinder the learning L2. Additionally, it is

recommended that bilingualism as teaching support should develop into a justifiable topic for discussion in advanced research.

Key words: Bilingualism, L1, L2, ELT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The present study explores the contribution made by bilingualism in a language class and that a child can be exposed to two or more languages at an initial stage at a very low level. It includes my personal experience of teaching English language for years. The analysis of the role of bilingualism in learning and teaching comes into sight to be warranted in Pakistani second language. This report suggests the clarification and historical development of bilingualism over time.

However, the current study is not a reflection of the values of bilingualism, but it elaborates the importance of the learning of a second language. The study focuses on both qualitative and quantitative research design and concerning classroom surveillances and semi-structured interviews. The bilingualism does not diminish the students' communicative competence and its supports in teaching and learning process as well. It illuminates some misapprehensions that trouble foreign language teachers for decades. The data analyzes the teachers' response and feedback about the function of bilingualism. On the basis of this study, this can easily be seen that expressing a child to more than one language at a time is useful. Further, it is recommended that bilingualism as teaching support should become a justifiable topic for discussion in advance research.

Language is the main mean of communication. It is the primary way of expressing our thoughts, ideas, and emotions. Even though it looks like a simple natural process, the acquisition of a language takes time. Children are born without a language; they acquire it parallel with their growth. Interesting is the fact that without any particular training, a child at the age of four/five is able to say and remember several words and even construct some simple grammatical forms (of course the child is not aware of any

grammatical form and construction at that age). As the child grows up, the amount of words in his vocabulary enlarges.

The development of a human being is a complex process. It includes its physical construction and psychological maturity. Obviously, the second one is way more difficult to be achieved and the same is based and depends on the skills and abilities of the person itself. It is a mixture of gained and born features which include values, beliefs, emotions, and expression of all the above mentioned. We all know that the expression of their inner world and their knowledge (or the process of speaking) is a typical feature of human beings and the same distinguishes them from other creatures, but not everyone is familiar or understands the process that they themselves go through in order to achieve it. In this paper, we tried to describe and explain it in detail from a psycholinguistic point of view. We focused our search on the importance of language as one and the best-known way of expressing ourselves and communication, memory as the main factor of learning and remembering, and bilingualism as an advanced form of both things.

Bilingualism is the ability of a person to speak two languages. This ability is either acquired in infancy or later. Learning two languages at a time may seem very difficult for an adult, but for a child, it is a 'possible mission'. A child may be exposed to two languages within the family (two parents – two languages) and for this reason, she/he will acquire both of them. The child will address to each parent in the language that the parent addresses the child (one – parent; one – language strategy). But, we have larger scale of bilingualism than individual or family bilingualism; that's societal bilingualism. It is a result of a big advanced progressive society which requires more skills and ways of expressing for being part of it. Being part of a 'world society' means to be able to speak to it. For this reason fluency in more than one language makes you more suitable in this globalized world, and the culture that a language brings with it empowers the bilinguals to shift not only between languages but also between cultures. The development of a human being has no end. The utterances that we can produce out of our vocabulary are endless. The greater our memory is, the easier will be the learning of a new language which would make us bilinguals. A bilingual means an intelligent, prepared and desirable citizen of the world. As the objective of the research study is to locate whether bilingualism is

helpful in learning and teaching a second language. The classroom observations were utilized as the most important research tool. It is also compulsory for the researcher to make clear and identify the target population. The population is described in keeping with the goals of the present study.

1.2 Research Objectives

The main research objectives of the present study have been:

- To identify the significance of bilingualism in teaching a second language in a language class.
- To investigate that learners can be exposed to two or more than two languages at an initial stage.
- To know the observations of the language teachers about the role of bilingualism in the English language class.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions have been organized for the current study:

- a. What is the significance of bilingualism in teaching second language class?
- b. How do the teachers come across at the issue of bilingualism in teaching and learning in L2 classes?

1.4 Significance of the Study

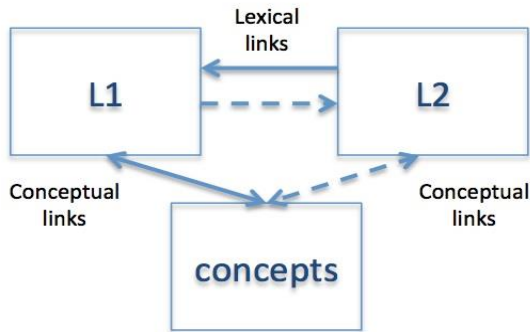
- This study is an attempt to provide an overview of the role of bilingualism in teaching a second language in our local context.
- In our local context, it is essential because bilingualism plays a vital role in understanding the intricate situations among human interaction and linguistic problems faced by the students and teachers.
- It is hoped that this research will provide great assistance and understanding in using language 1 for the learning of a second language.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Background of bilingual education:

Bilingual education is a type of “education involving two languages as media of instruction” (Christian & Genesee, 2001, p. 1), but most of

the critics think that bilingual education includes “instruction in the native language most of the school day” (Porter, 1994; cited in Brisk, 2006, p. 31). Several laws regarding bilingual education have been passed, since 1839.



The above figure highlights the lexical connection with the second language to first language and it shows that second language is stronger than first language. While on the behalf of conceptual memory first language is stronger than second language.

2.2. Bilingualism in Pakistan

In Pakistan, there are different languages spoken i.e. Sindhi, Blauchi, Pushto, Punjabi and Seraiki. After the independence in 1947, Urdu was declared the national language of Pakistan. Though spoken as a mother tongue by only a small proportion, Urdu was given this status and prominence in order to strengthen the unity of provinces. We can rightly claim that most Pakistanis are bilingual since they first acquire their mother tongue and then learn Urdu as their national language and Lingua Franca.

2.3. Discussion over bilingual education

Regardless of the extensive research on bilingual education programs, extreme disagreement still exists concerning the effectiveness of bilingual education. Bilingual-education proponents argue that cultural and language varieties are national strengths that should be cultivated (Baker & Prys Jouns, 1998).

Collier and Thomas (1999) reported that “two-way bilingual education was the ideal program for the long-term academic success of language-minority students”. Thomas and Collier (1996) claim that in bilingual programs, language-minority students when to receive

academic instruction in the first language for at least six years tend to do best while receiving progressively more of the same kind of instruction in the second language.

Moreover, Collier and Thomas (1999) conclude that talented bilingual students develop stronger rational abilities over monolingual students and that they generally perform better than the monolingual students on school tests. Hakuta (1986) also clearly shows that those who continue developing their first languages have certain cognitive advantages over their English-only counterparts. Similarly, Cummins (2000b) points out that "bilingualism is associated with improved linguistic, cognitive, and academic development when both languages are encouraged to develop" (p. Xi). Crawford (1992) also stresses that when their first language is refined alongside English, LEP students can normally develop their English fluency. He added that by entering the mainstream later, they can have improved chances of success and fluency in two languages.

2.4. Impact on Language Teaching

As Krashen (1996, 1999) debates, "I believe that language-minority children should gain knowledge in their regional languages early to facilitate literacy development in English. I personally uphold gradual exit programs like the one proposed by Krashen in which LEP students first learn math in the heritage language, then move to a sheltered math class, and finally to a mainstream class. In this way, students learn academic English used in a math class as well as more math when they take the mainstream course". Krashen's (1996) claim that "in bilingual programs subject matter should be taught in the first language without translation, and literacy in the first language should be developed so that it can transfer naturally to the second language". The language teachers agree that language teaching should start with respect and understanding the heritage language students bring to school (Goodman, 2006).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this section is to illustrate the procedure and steps that have been adopted in conducting this study. For example, the technique of selection of samples and the collection of data is being discussed. However, it commences by restating the research

questions. The data are investigated in a table and graphical way. The method applied in comparable studies is discussed, and lastly, the design of the study is delineated. The research strategies also highlight the techniques and methods used in this present research study. Thus, the rationale of this study is to emphasize the ways in which data have been collected, evaluated and formulated in order to authenticate the hypothesis made at the start of the present research study.

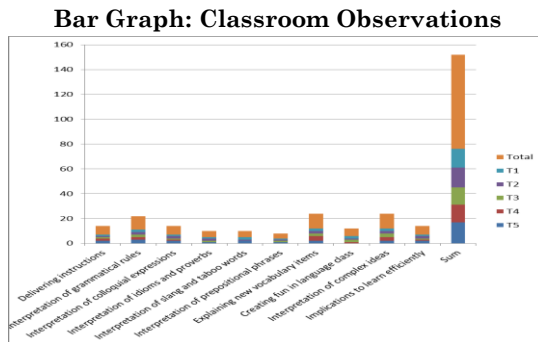
In this present study, the researcher has chosen to investigate the aspects of English language teaching skills as taught in Secondary Schools of Pakistan. The investigation facilitates systematic in exploring from all the aspects, the researcher comes across all the dimensions of the present study and to find out the issues and recommends the careful observation of assessment. The population consists of 125 students from 9th and 10th classes for the duration of two weeks. The schools were selected from Multan region Punjab Pakistan. These classes were being taught by two language teachers who have been teaching for the last ten years. The researcher has been the silent observer during the English language class. However, he collected information on what circumstances and how many times teachers employed mother tongue to facilitate the students in learning a second language. Good and Halt (2005) argue that “a sample is a smaller representation of the larger whole”. It is observed that the basic needs for a sampling process are that it must be truly representative and sufficient as well. The sample is clarified as “the true representative of the universe which has all the characteristics of the entire universe”. The data has been gathered through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations.

Classroom observation of the 9th and 10th classes was conducted with teachers in different Secondary Schools of the Multan region (Punjab, Pakistan. These were public schools. The findings are noted on an observation sheet and analyzed later on. Furthermore, five teachers were selected who were conducting English language skills i.e. speaking, listening, reading and writing. It is observed very positive in exploring out that teachers who were using diverse language skills and they utilized bilingualism very successfully during teaching a second language class. Though, it was noted how frequently, and on how many times first language was employed by the teachers. To acquire more valid data, the teachers and students

were not notified of the objective of observations in advance, otherwise it would have complicated to attain the required results. The observations were 40 minutes. The classroom observations were relating to teacher-specific and each teacher’s class was observed two times in a week. However, the ten variables were acknowledged prior to the start of the classes and their rate of recurrence has been analyzed.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher observed classes and the results are given below:



The above figure shows the number of instances in which the mother tongue (L1) was employed in a 40-minute class for different purposes. It displays evidence that the mother tongue has been renovated through all the English teachers for diverse function, like of delivering instructions, interpretation of grammatical rules, colloquial expressions, interpretation of idioms and proverbs, interpretation of slang words, prepositional phrases, new vocabulary items, creating fun in the class, interpretation of complex ideas, and implications to learn efficiently. As a whole, the positive response was observed during the use of mother tongue in the language class. However, the major use of the mother tongue was utilized during the interpretation of meanings of the words for the accurate nature of things.

4.1. The Response and Analysis of Class One

In class one the teacher employed mother tongue (L1) for delivering instructions to the students once a time. The teacher has been studied

in Governmental Institutions and where Grammar Translation Method is used for teaching English language. However, the teacher employed mother tongue (L1) and he was observed very comfortably in the language class. During the interpretation of grammatical rules the teacher exercised L1 twice a time to make it clearer. The teacher used only once L1 while explaining the colloquial expressions. While interpreting idioms and proverbs, it is observed that the teacher employed mother tongue only one time. It has been observed that during the interpreting of the prepositional phrases only once L1 was used by the teacher. The teacher used two times L1 during the explanation of new vocabulary items. However, the English teacher utilized twice a time L1 during creating fun in the language class. Likewise, interpretation of complex ideas only twice a time mother tongue was exercised. Furthermore, at the end of the session the teacher practiced L1, once a time during the implications and suggestions how to learn efficiently. In all these circumstances, it is proved that the use of the mother tongue (L1) really very effective and resourceful for the learners and teachers as well. In this way the teacher understood the student's point of view very easily. The students were found very eager when the L1 used as an equivalent tool during the class. Additionally, it was also noticed that sometimes the teacher was a bit perplexed, in complex situations; as a result the use of Urdu language became approximately inevitable.

4.2. The Response and Analysis of Class Two

In the second session of the class, the teacher employed L1 in the class relatively fewer than other English faculty. It is because he was taught in a pure English medium school where he used to explain everything in L2, so his experience provided him a dissimilar sort of consideration. Though the students were overexcited when entered the class, but they felt little difficulty on account of his fluency and accent. The teacher employed mother tongue (L1) for delivering instructions to the students once a time. However, the teacher employed mother tongue (L1) and he was observed very comfortably in the language class. During the interpretation of grammatical rules the teacher exercised L1 twice a time to make it clearer. The teacher used twice a time L1 while explaining the colloquial expressions. While interpreting idioms and proverbs, the teacher employed mother tongue (L1) once a time. It has been observed that during the

interpreting of the prepositional phrases only once L1 was used by the teacher. The teacher used two times L1 during the explanation of new vocabulary items. However, the English teacher utilized once L1 during creating fun in the language class. Likewise, during the interpretation of complex ideas L1 exercised only once a time. Furthermore, at the end of the session the teacher practiced L1, twice during the implications and suggestions how to learn efficiently.

4.3. The Response and Analysis of Class Three

In the third session, the teacher was looking more confident and promising at utilizing L1 in the language class. The teacher was found proficient in using local languages of Pakistan. He was determined that his competency and experience in L1 and use of GTM will cater him useful in language class. The teacher employed mother tongue (L1) for delivering instructions to the students once a time. However, the teacher employed mother tongue (L1) and he was observed very comfortably in the language class. During the interpretation of grammatical rules the teacher exercised L1 twice a time to make it clearer. The teacher used once a time L1 while explaining the colloquial expressions. While interpreting idioms and proverbs, the teacher employed mother tongue (L1) once a time. It has been observed that during the interpreting of the prepositional phrases and slang words only once L1 was used by the teacher. The teacher used two times L1 during the explanation of new vocabulary items. However, the English teacher utilized twice a time L1 during creating fun in the language class. Likewise, during the interpretation of complex ideas L1 exercised thrice a time. Furthermore, at the end of the session the teacher practiced L1 once during the implications and suggestions how to learn efficiently. The students got the teacher's point of view very easily due to the use of the mother tongue (L1).

4.4. The Response and Analysis of Class Four

In the fourth session, there was a very young teacher was appointed from the rest of his faculty members. Though, he was not appearing proficient and confident. The study showed that he had prepared his lesson well-mannered but it was more bookish than creating one. The teacher employed mother tongue (L1) for delivering instructions to the students once a time. However, the teacher employed the mother tongue (L1) and he was observed very comfortably in the language

class. During the interpretation of grammatical rules the teacher exercised L1 twice a time to make it clearer. The teacher used twice a time L1 while explaining the colloquial expressions. While interpreting idioms and proverbs, the teacher employed mother tongue (L1) once a time. It has been observed that during the interpreting of the prepositional phrases only once L1 was used by the teacher. The teacher used two times L1 during the explanation of new vocabulary items. However, the English teacher utilized once L1 during creating fun in the language class. Likewise, during the interpretation of complex ideas L1 exercised only once a time. Furthermore, at the end of the session the teacher practiced L1, twice during the implications and suggestions how to learn efficiently. This session was held successfully.

4.5. The Response and Analysis of Class Five

In the fifth session, the teacher has been three years' experience in teaching English language and he was a well-read person and flexible. His teaching method and techniques were very effective and useful in learning a language. He had also efficient and used communicative techniques. He employed mother tongue (L1) for delivering instructions to the students twice a time. However, the teacher employed mother tongue (L1) and he was observed very comfortably in the language class. During the interpretation of grammatical rules the teacher exercised L1 thrice a time to make it clearer. The teacher used twice a time L1 while explaining the colloquial expressions. While interpreting idioms and proverbs, the teacher employed mother tongue (L1) once a time. It has been observed that during the interpreting of the prepositional phrases only twice a time L1 was used by the teacher. The teacher used two times L1 during the explanation of new vocabulary items. However, the English teacher does not utilize L1 during creating fun in the language class. Likewise, during the interpretation of complex ideas L1 exercised only twice a time. Furthermore, at the end of the session the teacher practiced L1, twice during the implications and suggestions how to learn efficiently. It is noted that the important thing during the class was teacher's confidence and skill which made the language class more learned and matured. Thus, the experience and practice give evidence of validity of hypothesis.

5 CONCLUSION

The current study examines the use of bilingualism and its consequence in teaching a language class which helps the learning of a second language at the secondary level. The most important question for research study has been: what function does bilingualism play in the teaching of language i.e. English as a second language. However, the hypothesis of the study demonstrates that bilingualism in English language classes does not diminish the learner's exposure and the capacity to communicate well in L2, and it supports the learning and teaching process. We in such a situation can teach more than one language, even at an early stage and the children learn them easily. The use of L1 (mother tongue) in the language class proves that the exercise of mother tongue in learning a foreign language essentially follows the identical route which is acquired in learning L1. Therefore, the significance of bilingualism in learning a second language in a language class is recommended.

- a) The study illustrates that bilingualism has a small but significant role play in a language class.
- b) In our local structure where learners have less chance to speak and utilize the L2 outside of the classroom, the L2 should be used on a large scale.
- c) Bilingualism can be used as a teaching tool in the classroom where the learners may share the same L1.
- d) The study reveals that in English language classes, bilingualism plays only a facilitating and effective role. The main focus of communication should be in the English medium.
- e) The exercise of bilingualism does not diminish the motivation of the students if it is employed only on necessitated occasions.

In the end, the researcher concludes that we should take the opportunity of bilingualism in our educational system and should not be restricted in one language. We should show some flexibility in language matters. In-country the use of English language can be considered a sign of superiority and we do not prefer our mother tongue and national language. But we should see China that has

made progress in its own language and English is used as a language of communication to the other countries of the world.

5.1. Recommendations

In order to get maximum advantages and to make the use of bilingualism more effective and result giving in the teaching of English in the class, following are some recommendations that have been outlined from the current study.

- a) More than 1 language can be taught easily with the help of bilingualism (use of the mother tongue).
- b) Furthermore, this option to language learning does not lessen the motivation among the students.
- c) The institution should engage the language learning class by focusing on behavior, discipline and activities.
- d) The reality is that older children are more efficient foreign language learners than younger children” and it is also seen that they are more language proficient in translating into better foreign language learning.

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