

Significance of Bilingualism in a Language Class and its Role in Teaching a Second Language at Secondary Level in Pakistan

Muhammad Asif^{1*} & Zahoor Hussain²

¹Instructor in English, Virtual University of Pakistan

²Lecturer in English, BZU Bahadur Campus, Layyah, Pakistan

*Corresponding Author's E-mail: asif.vu12@gmail.com

Abstract

The study is an attempt to prove the significance and usefulness of bilingualism in a language class. It shows the use of language 1 (L1) in a second language learning class is legitimate and helps in learning more than one language at a time as it makes the concepts easier to understand. It recommends an elucidation, focused on the contiguity of bilingualism over time that stands foremost practice in second language English classes in Pakistan. It has been seen that the children learn as many languages as they are exposed to their natural environment. This acquisition of more than one language never be a headache for them. The study makes use of a both qualitative and quantitative research design. The semi-structured interviews and classroom observation were conducted. The results of the study show that bilingualism as a great source in teaching aids which makes possible in learning a second language in the classroom. It is suggested that the parents and teachers should never bother about the use of language 1 (L1) in school or at home because it does not hinder the learning of a second language. Further, it is recommended that bilingualism as a teaching support should develop into a justifiable topic for discussion in advanced research.

Keywords: Bilingualism, Language Class, Teaching and Learning, L1, L2

1. Introduction

The present study explores the contribution made by bilingualism in a language class and that a child can be exposed to two or more than 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 a historical development of bilingualism over time.

However, the current study is not a reflection of the values of bilingualism, but it elaborates the importance in the learning of a second language. The study focuses on a both qualitative and quantitative research design and concerning classroom surveillances and semi-structured interviews. The bilingualism does not diminish the students' communicative competency 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 a teaching support should become a justifiable topic for discussion in advance research.

1.1 Design of the Present Study

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. However, a miniature, but cautiously preferred sample is drawn to represent the population. Nevertheless, the respondents of this study were 125 from the 9th and 10th class of the Iqra Secondary School, 17-Km, Ferozpur Road, Lahore the respondents were from varied social and cultural backgrounds. Different instruments were employed in this research.

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 a child 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 a teaching second language class?
- b. Can more than one language be taught to the children at the initial level?
- c. 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. It is a hot debate amongst the language teachers, whether or not bilingualism is a useful tool in a foreign language class. 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 a 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. Around this time, Ohio first started bilingual education by teaching students both English and

German. A dozen other states taught bilingual education using English and several languages, such as French, Spanish, Norwegian, Czech, Italian, Polish and Cherokee, by the end of the nineteenth century. However, as a result of anti-immigrant sentiments in the United States all bilingual education laws were abolished by the 1920's (<http://sitemaker.umich.edu/370bilinged>).

2.2. Bilingualism as a World-Wide Phenomenon

Bilingualism, as we have refined it is very common indeed. All over the world, pupils are required to attempt to learn at least one other language. They do so, of course, with varying degrees of success or to put it another way, they end up at different points on our cline of bilingualism. In addition to the imposition of a foreign language, there are many countries where the inhabitants speak more than one language. We have already drawn attention to Switzerland and United States, and we could add a great many more. Even the United Kingdom has its minority languages i.e. Welsh, Gaelic and Irish, its accompanying bilingual speakers. With immigration into British from the Indian subcontinent, there are now additional languages such as Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi Gujrati, and Bangali. Many children whose parents went to Britain from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh are now well advanced on the bilingual scale.

2.3. 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.

2.4. 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). They claim that bilingual education is the most effective way of teaching LEP students or ELLs. They believe that language-minority children can learn English, while maintaining their heritage languages and cultures. In other words, they advocate that the parallel development of academic skills in the heritage language and learning English as a second language should go side by side.

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 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.

2.5. Implications for language teaching: What can language teachers do?

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. He adds that comprehensible input in English should be provided directly in ESL and sheltered subject matter classes.

Most of the bilingual educators indicated that the rich diversity of heritage languages should be considered as a powerful linguistic and cultural resource that needs to be nurtured rather than a problem of academic achievement and cultural integration. Language-minority children need opportunities to think and learn in their heritage languages. Many language teachers agree that language teaching should start with respect and understanding the heritage language students bring to school (Goodman, 2006). This attitude from teachers will help boost students' self-respect. In other words, teachers' attitudes towards the regional language play a crucial role in effectively meeting the needs of ELLs. According to my point of view teachers who are open to other cultures, bilingualism or multilingualism, and research-based teaching tactics are more likely to adapt their classrooms and syllabi to incorporate the identities of the students in their classrooms. Moreover, language-minority students whose identities, including heritage language, are embraced are more likely to experience academic and social success in the classroom. The majority of the students can also benefit from the exposure to new cultures, perspectives, and languages.

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.

3.1 Area of the Study

In this present study, the researcher has chosen to investigate the aspects of English language teaching skills as taught in the Iqra Huffaz Secondary School, 17-km Ferozepur Road Lahore. Here in this school all the students are Hafiz-e-Quran and they are really keen to learn English language. Remember this is an English medium school and the students joined the school without any background knowledge of the English language. The investigation facilitates systematic in exploring from all the aspects, the researcher comes across upon 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 class for the duration of two weeks. These classes were being taught by two language teachers who have been teaching for the last ten years.

3.2 Instruments

Research has been conducted to collect the necessary outcome regarding analysis and investigation of the present study. This research illustrates its material from diverse resources, for instance:

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.

3.3 Population

It is necessarily imperative to select some individuals from a sample population. However, a miniature sample chosen is utilized to signify the population. However, the population of the recent research was the respondents of Iqra Huffaz Secondary School situated at 17-km Ferozepur Road Lahore. This population comprises different classes of socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. It was expected that the sample of 50 respondents and 5 teachers would be a true representation of the chosen universe on a large.

3.4 Sample

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 miniature number of samples is an illustration of a large group. However, the idea of sampling is to draw conclusions concerning the universe.

4. Data Collection and Data Analysis

A good research involves data collection tools that are appropriate for compilation of applicable data. As the objective of this research explores the empirical use of bilingualism in a second language learning class, classroom

observation review was used as the main tool. The questions of the questionnaire were organized regarding research objectives and also discussed with the senior research scholar as well. Most of the questions were open-ended and some were close-ended. The researcher intended to represent the data collection, relating to the research topic. Moreover, the researcher has represented the data in tables and bar graphs. The data has been gathered through semi structured interviews and classroom observations.

4.1. Classroom Observations

Classroom observation of the 9th and 10th classes was conducted with teachers in the Iqra Huffaz Secondary School, 17-Km Ferozepur Lahore for two weeks. The findings are noted on an observation sheet and analyzed later on. Furthermore, five teachers were selected who was 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 the teaching a second language class. Though, it was noted that 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.

4.2. Classroom Observations at Iqra Secondary School, Lahore

The researcher observed classes at the Iqra Huffaz Secondary School, 17 Km, Ferozepur Road, Lahore the results of which are given below:

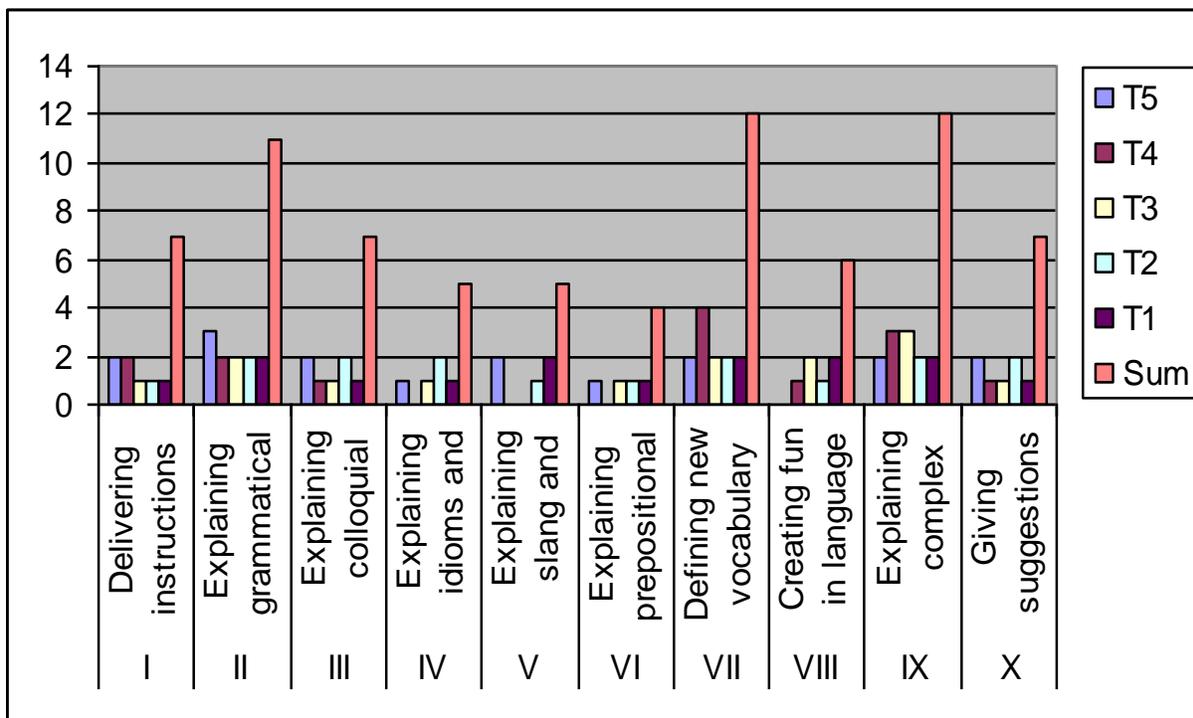
Table 1: Classroom Observations at Iqra Secondary School Lahore (Summary)

Sr. #	Circumstances in which L1 was utilized	T5	T4	T3	T2	T1	Total
I	Delivering instructions	2	2	1	1	1	7
II	Interpretation of grammatical rules	3	2	2	2	2	11
III	Interpretation of colloquial expressions	2	1	1	2	1	7
IV	Interpretation of idioms and proverbs	1	0	1	2	1	5
V	Interpretation of slang and taboo words	2	0	0	1	2	5
VI	Interpretation of prepositional phrases	1	0	1	1	1	4
VII	Explaining new vocabulary items	2	4	2	2	2	12
VIII	Creating fun in language class	0	1	2	1	2	6
IX	Interpretation of complex ideas	2	3	3	2	2	12
X	Implications to learn efficiently	2	1	1	2	1	7
	Sum	17	14	14	16	15	76

The above table shows the number of instances on which 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. The results are also presented in the figure given below.

Figure 1: Description of data by graph



4.3. The Response and Analysis of Class One

In the class one the teacher employed mother tongue (L1) for delivering instructions to the students for 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 comfortable 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 the 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 teacher 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.

4.4. 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 for once a time. However, the teacher employed mother tongue (L1) and he was observed very comfortable 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 the 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.

4.5. The Response and Analysis of Class Three

At 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 for once a time. However, the teacher employed mother tongue (L1) and he was observed very comfortable 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 the 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).

4.6. 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 in well mannered but it was more bookish than creating one. The teacher employed mother tongue (L1) for delivering instructions to the students for once a time. However, the teacher employed mother tongue (L1) and he was observed very comfortable 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 the 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.

4.7. 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 technique. He employed mother tongue (L1) for delivering instructions to the students for twice a time. However, the teacher employed mother tongue (L1) and he was observed very comfortable 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 the 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. Findings and Recommendations

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 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 demonstrate 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.

5.1 Findings

- a) The study illustrates that the 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 at 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 English medium.
- e) The exercise of bilingualism does not diminish the motivation of the students if it is employed only on necessitated occasions.

5.2 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 the some recommendations which have been outlined from the current study.

- a) The teachers should develop the motivation among the students as the students experience more motivated when they learn in a recognizable environment.
- b) The study point out that bilingualism has a minute, but vital role to play in communicating the content and meaning. However, this role is very significant while teaching integrated language skill courses.
- c) The teacher should employ the bilingualism fairly and judiciously and the most important medium of instruction must be English. Additionally, students should be well-known with the target language, its pronunciation, socio-cultural and semantic background as well.
- d) More than 1 language can be taught easily with the help of bilingualism (use of the mother tongue).
- e) Furthermore, this option to language learning does not lessen the motivation among the students.
- f) The institution should engage the language learning class by focusing behavior, discipline and activities.
- g) 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.

6. Conclusion

In the end the researcher concludes that we should take the opportunity of bilingualism in our educational system and should not be restrict in one language. We should show some flexibility in language matter. In country the use of English language can be considered the sign of superiority and we don 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.

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