

Pedagogy of English and Impact of Bilingualism on Children in Indian Schools

India is a land of multilingualism. Although, there are more than 300+ languages and 120+ official languages, the top two languages predominant are: Hindi and English (Haseli, 2010). Out of these two, the intra-global communication language is English. People in India officially talk in English outside their personal spaces.

In the education sector, IT sector, and Health sector, everywhere people practice English as a medium of communication (“The Official Languages Act”, 1963). English is the de facto national language of India (Joseph, 2011). This is because of two reasons: the British’s colonization impact and the requirement for a common language to avoid Intra-communication disputes.

There is no denial of the importance of learning English for children in government schools in India. However, the success of any language-in-education policy in India will depend on a flexible multilingual approach that recognizes the languages existing in the ecology of children (which will vary from state to state as media of instruction), acknowledges the importance of learning the English language, and ushers in effective pedagogical reforms (Rupanjali & Noblit 2020).

And post digitalization era, multinational companies have been booming and the scope of job opportunities outside India is increasing yearly (Aula, 2014). Hence and due to its varied high

income, people prefer their children to be in IT sectors and hence even Pre-Schoolers begin their education in English.

However, the thinking is local. Every state teaches English as a second language, giving importance to their regional language as their first language. But every subject other than regional language is taught in English. And the schools that teach the subjects in English are English-medium schools. Recently, in Rajasthan, government English-medium schools have received three times more applications than the available seats (Sadhu, 2021). This is expanding throughout India and the effect of Bilingualism is impacting almost every Indian kid who is affording their kids to school. At least, English is one of the subjects in every school.

On one side, Bilingualism helps good brain development (Sedivy, 2020). Also, its widespread usage helps across different speech communities. But on the other hand, there have been reports of educational failure, capability deprivation, and poverty in minority linguistic groups.

Individual and community bilingualism at the local or regional levels can be seen as constituting the first incremental step towards concentric layers of societal multilingualism. (Mohanty, 2010).

Although bilingualism prevails, it is an additional practice locally and being practiced in India, unlike Indians practicing English in foreign lands. The impact on culture is very less because English is a luxury medium of communication across the land that offers education of the Indian system in English. Whereas it is different in foreign lands.

The thinking and thought process is not uprooted although there is bilingualism and English dominance in the education system. The education is taught in English. But the nativity accent owns the language. Sedivy talks about artificial language and transitional probabilities (The Mind and Language, pp. 122 -123). Moreover, Sedivy also talks about how crosslinguistic

affects learning in children (The Mind and Language, pp. 141- 143). Some Indianisms are however little known beyond South Asia and are liable to be regarded by native speakers of English as ‘deviant’ in various ways (Mehrotra, 2003).

The bilingualism offered in India, however, does not help develop or promote the deepest-rooted or the local most important culture as Indians tend to prefer more Westernism (Deora, 2011).

And hence, Indian culture is not ‘highlighted’ extensively and exclusively to the current generation. When discipline and moral ethics are taught early during a child’s formative years, children will be conditioned to behave as responsible citizens (The New Indian Express, 2016).

Westernization is affecting one of the world's oldest and richest cultures by taking away the traditions, customs, and family values that were once predominant in traditional Indian households (Misra, 2022). This is mainly because of the bilingualism prevalence in India.

The teaching is in English mainly to acquire jobs in Multinational platforms, and travel across the globe for financial necessities. This lets children acquire knowledge of the western culture, and speak and pronounce accents in a westernized way, that lets them stay behind in their own roots. While these happen at later stages of adulthood, the initial learning of English knowledge helps Indians acquire the required knowledge on transition easily. Indian families, who have lived in the United States for 20+ years, speak differently to me than they do to their American colleagues on the phone. For some reason, many Indians see this as a reason to judge they claim that having two accents makes us two-faced sell-outs (Bhat, 2017).

Because of the fact, Bilingualism is natural in the Indian system naturally, the tendency to adapt to different exposures remains easy for Indians. In the case of multilingual India, code-switching

is an everyday practice among speakers who share or know more than one code or language. The different educated varieties of Indian English possess shared characteristics in their phonology, morphology, lexis, syntax, and semantics. For instance, in phonology, since Indian languages are syllable-timed and English is a stressed-timed language, such a difference leads to prosodic transfer in IE which is not found in native varieties of English. Vaid has observed that traditional bilingualism has tended to focus on “the ability of bilinguals to keep their languages separate in the encoding or decoding process” (Sunita, 2021).

Because both languages of bilinguals are constantly active, bilinguals need to manage attention to the target language and avoid interference from the non-target language. This process is likely carried out by recruiting the executive function (EF) system, a system that is also the basis for multitasking. Crucially, multitasking is also strongly dependent on EF. The central argument, therefore, is that bilingual language use is a special case of multitasking, and the claim is that the use of EF to manage attention to two languages strengthens EF processes for other purposes (Poarch, 2015). Hence the impact of bilingualism in Indian education is helping Indians tend to be rich in varied languages, cultures, and heritages. It helps them code-switch and expertise to multitask efficiently.

The Indian education system predominantly uses English as a medium of communication. This paper analyses the pedagogical practices involved in teaching the English language and the impact of bilingualism on children learning foreign and native languages together. Learning English and learning in English becomes a two-part process. Indian schools adopt this two-part process for students to acquire fluency in English. This process helps children learn the language in the first stage and apply the linguistic knowledge to learn other concepts in English. The paper

also analyses how kids develop code-switching with the cognition developed through bilingualism.

Traditionally, Indian schools enroll children above the age of two in kindergarten. At the age of two, children are capable of engaging in joint attention, which enhances the development of their vocabulary (Sedivy, 2020, p. 24). In lower kindergarten and upper kindergarten classes, English is taught as a separate subject. The kids learn the alphabets and the basics of writing (scripting) in English. Small words and sentences are taught to listen, observe, and gain knowledge on the phonetical aspect of the language. The English language is also used to teach math and social science subjects.

Elementary school pedagogical methods of teaching English, include the Structural Approach, Communicative Language Teaching (Rajeev, 2020), Grammar Translation Method (Grover, 2014), and Direct approach (Rajeev, 2020).

The structural approach helps to set a foundation in the language. Structured patterns and the recursive power of syntax help children gain control over alphabets, and to nest the words with each other (Sedivy, 2020, pp. 26-29). Communicative language teaching aims at engaging children in listening and speaking. The Grammar Translation method involves the teaching of sentence patterns and differentiating them from the native language structure (Grover, 2014).

Direct Approach helps children think in English without translating them from the local language (Rajeev, 2020). With the constant practice of the approaches mentioned above, children start talking in English without seeking assistance from the middle school level.

While children continue to learn their native languages in school and at home, they get to engage in different social experiences and are trained to code-switch parallelly (Kumar et. Al, 2021). This

impact of bilingualism develops a cognition to adapt to the English language and its aspects (as needed), as per the concept of survival of the fittest language and cultural transmission view of language change (Sedivy, 2020, pp. 55-56).

Research Agenda

Research has been conducted in various schools across India to check how bilingualism impacts learning and communication. This aims to check on the pedagogical aspects of English and its effect on cognition and code-switching in children.

Research findings

According to various research conducted in multiple states across India :

- a. Multilingualism is predominant and English is the main mode of communication between teachers and students. (Tsimpli et, al, 2020)
- b. However, explaining concepts involves a translangual process – translating the words and providing the meaning of words in the native language. 69 % of it is used to explain difficult words. (Anderson. J & Lightfoot. A, 2021).
- c. L-1 Inclusive approaches (where English and local native languages are in practice to teach English and other subjects), had two different stages. L1- Mediated learning where children gained self-empowerment, L1 for writing and organizing in English which improved metalinguistic awareness as well as improved fluency in talking English. (Anderson. J & Lightfoot. A, 2021).
- d. Socio-Economic status contributes to learning in English and thereby the cognition is diversified accordingly across India (Bhattacharya, 2022).

- e. The direct method has more impact than the grammar-translation method. Children improved fluency with direct methods compared to the Grammar translational method (Grover, 2014).
- f. English vocabulary is Indianized in India which has its way of pronouncing words (Bhattacharya, 2022).
- g. In terms of conceptual memory, the first language (Indian native language) is superior to a second language(English), whereas the second language is superior in terms of procedural memory (Kumar et. Al, 2021).
- h. Indians generally have the roots of receptive multilingualism. Wernicke area and Broca area (Sedivy, 2020) which is responsible for language comprehension and speaking respectively; the associated brain activities make radical efforts in gaining cognition to a third-party language (English) easily and effectively hence (Murti. A, 2021).
- i. Indian kids intend to make paralinguistic use (Sedivy, 2020) while speaking English with loud voices and altering the pitches (Thelma W.E, 1975).
- j. Fluid intelligence and working memory capacity were associated with literacy performance in similar ways in Hindi and English, showing that these aspects of cognition may support language development in the broad sense and potentially development in other school skills (Vogelzang. M. et.al, 2022).
- k. The neural system (white matter) (Sedivy, 2020, p. 87) responsible for traversing information between brain areas, helps bilingualism to control and adapt to contexts on a day-to-day basis (Lai, G., & O'Brien. B. A, 2020).
- l. Based on the connectionist model (Sedivy, 2020, p.199), bilinguals in the dual-language context demonstrated faster reaction times, responding to the research queries and high

efficiency; yet bilinguals' language-switching behaviors are contextually and environmentally dependent (Lai, G., & O'Brien, B. A, 2020).

Conclusion

On one side, Bilingualism helps good brain development (Sedivy, 2020). Also, its widespread usage helps across different speech communities. Indians' motive behind learning English is mainly to acquire jobs in Multinational platforms and travel across the globe for financial necessities. The Indian kids born in western countries acquire knowledge of the western culture, and speak and pronounce accents in a westernized way, that lets them stay behind in their roots. Because of the fact, Bilingualism is natural in the Indian system naturally, the tendency to adapt to different exposures remains easy for Indians. Moreover, code-switching is an everyday practice among speakers who share or know more than one code or language. Hence the impact of bilingualism in Indian education is helping Indians tend to be rich in varied languages, cultures, and heritages. It helps them code-switch and expertise multitask efficiently.

Implications:

Research shows that the efficiency of multitasking and the ability to code-switch becomes easy. The positive aspects override the negative impacts of bilingualism on cognition. The researcher's study shows students process bilingualism and improve their cognitive skills while it should be extended to study the process of translation with the help of the Connectionist model (Sedivy,

2020) to understand the impacts of *lexical breadth and depth* with bilingualism. Lexical breadth is the knowledge of vocabulary (quantity of words in a language) and lexical depth is about knowing the meaning and logic of utilization of words in a given language. (Rego & Bhat, 2022). More Research in this area will be helpful to improve spoken English and rectify communication gaps.

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