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Socioeconomic Background as a Factor Contributing in Semilingualism

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the role of socioeconomic background as a significant contributing factor to the phenomenon of semilingualism, especially in underprivileged areas in Pakistan. Semilingualism describes an individual who has limited skills in multiple languages which yields inadequate communication with reduced cognitive growth. This study design involves the collection of qualitative data by conducting semi-structured interviews and direct observations with a total of 100 participants, including university and college students. Cummins' threshold hypothesis together with critical capitalist perspectives to evaluate how social economic inequality affects bilingual and multilingual language development patterns through their analysis of gathered data. Research findings demonstrate that students from under privileged backgrounds face restricted language growth because they lack enough language exposure in their native tongue and their additional language. Moreover, this study explores the multifaceted relationships between economic status and linguistic progress while offering beneficial solutions to educational administrators who work to achieve linguistic justice and bilingual excellence among students from different backgrounds.

Introduction

In a society, human beings and languages cannot be separated from each other .In a social interaction, people need a language. It is important for all people to survive in their lives. According to Dada (2004), constant communication with people is essential at every phase of life. The fetus in the womb uses somewhat unique means of communication with its mother when the baby is ready for delivery. Language is the main tool for communication; it is an arbitrary vocal system utilized by people of a speech community.

Pakistan is a multilingual country and its mother tongue is Urdu. Additionally, Pakistan has four principle provisional languages: Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi and Balochi and main local languages are Kashimir ,Saraiki, Potwari, Kalash,Balti, Koti Farsi,Hindko and Shina etc. Considering this rich historical language legacy, on time of independence, uncertainty arose over what language should be followed as a medium of instruction. Since then, the loss of political balance has not given time for meaningful and reasonable efforts to be taken in order to correct this state of affairs. A clean language coverage has to be produced in order to solve this problem since it can help or give direction for the consistency of the instructional medium.

At Present, within the training machine of Pakistan, English and Urdu are being encouraged and the schooling to the kids is offered in both languages. In the elite or private

schools, the students receive English-furnished entire education. Urdu is utilized in government institutions. Students from several groups and ethnicities in a multilingual state like Pakistan for whom neither English is their first language neither Urdu . Their first and secondary education is obtained through languages which are second or third languages to them . As a result, individuals have difficulty comprehending intellectual ideas and are unable to speak even one language fluently.

As a result of discriminatory teaching and socio economic background certain bilingual pupils are unable to achieve a high level of academic proficiency in either of their languages of primary and secondary instruction, and this phenomenon is referred to as semi-lingualism (Cummins, 2000).

People who have their home tongue and second language both at a low level of development, with noticeable deficiencies in both, are said to be semi-lingual. The word semi-lingualism is used to characterize people in this situation. People with a semi-literate level of education must frequently reflect on the manner in which they use language. It's possible that they are grammatically poor in both languages and have a small vocabulary in each of them. People who just have a basic level of literacy, struggle to think clearly (Schmidt-Rohlfing, 2006).

Hansegard (1975) defined the term "semilingualism" as deficiencies in the ability to communicate in six different areas of language.

- Size of vocabulary
- Correctness of language
- Subconscious processing of language(automatism)
- Language creation
- Mastery of the functions of language (e.g., emotive, cognitive)
- Meaning and imagery

The lack of fluency in two or more languages is referred to as semilingualism. The phrase can be used to describe either an individual or a group. Additionally, it may allude to a lack of development in the capability of acquiring more than two languages They may be referred to as bilingual in general, but in terms of their degree of skill, they are considered to be semi-lingual. This is due to the fact that they have not yet demonstrated mastery of either of the languages that they are learning (Olajo]ke & John, 2013).

The majority of middle school students' language proficiency is not a problem in school. Children who speak a language other than their native tongue, however, may spend a lot of time engaging in "relational battles" with their teachers of other languages (McDermott, 1977).

The term "semilingualism" refers to the fact that the child's language development has not yet reached its full potential. In order for the child to reach the stage of "balanced bilingualism" described earlier, the child will require a great deal more exposure to and practice with both the NL and the NNL. (Khan, 2019).

Hackman & Farah (2009) say that throughout life, socioeconomic status (SES) is linked to success in learning a second language. Pakistan has people who speak more than two languages, but not all of them are multilingual. A bilingual is someone who can speak more than one language fluently. In Pakistan students have the ability to speak two or more languages but lack competency in both languages. They have a limited vocabulary and sentence structure not just in their mother tongue but also in their second or target

language. This is the major matter of concern which needs to be addressed in today's educational system.

This study has seen the factors which are the root cause of blurred genres or semilingualism. Pakistani universities curriculum is designed in English and texts books are also in English but our majority of students have no command on first and the target language as well. And the dilemma is seen that neither we can put them in bilinguals category nor in monolinguals.

Literature Review

Bilingualism

The study of bilingualism looks at a wide range of topics from different fields. This chapter goes over the main areas and fields of study where bilingualism has been looked into. This study is mostly about semilingualism, which is sometimes thought of as blurred bilingualism.

An early definition of the term "bilingual" was provided by Haugen (1953:6), who stated that "a bilingual produces complete and meaningful utterances in other languages." Steiner (1998) goes one step further and says that a person who is bilingual (or trilingual) is one who doesn't translate by moving from side to side but instead reaches inside to the "symbiotic core" (Steiner, 1998, p. 125).

Cummins (1979), an early researcher in the field of bilingualism, proposed that bilinguals' ability to speak two languages is not stored separately in the brain and that each ability is not independent of the other. Cummins said that even though the structures of the two languages look different at first glance, there is a cognitive interdependence between them that makes it possible for linguistic practices to be transferred. He did this by explaining the concept of the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) through the image of the dual iceberg (Cummins, 1979).

According to another researcher Ruschiensky (2015), the terms "bilingualism," "multilingualism," and "plurilingualism" all refer to the bilingualism a plurality of independent languages, whether two (in the case of "bilingualism") or many (in the case of "multilingualism"), whether at the level of the individual (in the case of "plurilingualism") or the level of the society.

The concept of bilingualism can be interpreted in a number of different ways. People who are raised in cultures where only one language is spoken might have the misconception that bilingualism is reserved for a select few "special" individuals. In point of fact, one in every three people on the planet uses two or more languages on a daily basis, whether for work, family life, or leisure activities. If we count people who speak two or more languages on occasion, the proportion of monolinguals in the population drops significantly (Li Wei, 2000: 5).

Both the terms, "multilingual" and "bilingual" are used in this study. These terms include speakers with varying degrees of proficiency across languages, ranging from understanding only to include speaking as well as literacy skills in both languages. Some speakers only understand one language, while others can read and write in both languages. Although the study of foreign languages at school, particularly English as a foreign language (EFL), can be considered part of bilingualism, the term "bilingualism" more commonly refers to the acquisition of a second language and its consistent use for everyday purposes. The ability to communicate in two or more languages is not only a skill

that an individual possesses, but also something that is commonly practised within families and societies. The application of a language is typically domain-specific, meaning that it is connected to particular people, locations, or topics. Language is also closely linked with identity and allegiance; bilingual people's preference for using only one language may reflect shifts in both their own self-identity and their allegiances to the communities in which they participate (Scotton, 2006).

Bilingualism and Competence

Bilinguals rarely achieve a level of competence that is balanced across their two languages (Shin, 2004). A speaker of two languages does not constitute two monolingual speakers in one (Shin, 2004). Different sets of requirements and conditions inspire unique responses from individuals who speak more than one language (Bialystok, 2001). As a consequence, bilinguals develop varying degrees of linguistic competence in each of their two languages.

Sipra (2007) investigated the function that bilingualism plays in the process of learning English as a foreign language. In this study, a qualitative, interpretative research design was utilized, and it included the use of questionnaires, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. In general, the findings of the study indicate that using bilingualism as a teaching resource helps and makes learning L2 easier. There is a significant difference between teachers who speak two languages and those who speak only one language. In that, teachers who speak two languages have access to a much wider variety of resources. It has been observed that the use of bilingualism as a teaching aid should be recognized as a valid topic worthy of discussion and additional investigation that leads to semi-lingualism.

Semilingualism

Bloomfield is credited with being the first person to ever provide a description of semilingualism, which he did in the 1920s. The idea of being semi-lingual came about as a result of research that was done on the effects of shifts in political power and language among indigenous language minority populations in Scandinavia and North America. These studies led to the development of the concept. Bloomfield provided a description of the speech patterns of the Menominee Indians and made a specific observation on a 40-year-old man who was unable to communicate in either Menominee or English. He was unable to do so because he had lost his ability to speak either language. This person was only able to communicate in two languages, but his vocabulary was extremely restricted in both of them. The inflections he used were incorrect, and the grammatical structures he used were very straightforward. It was said that he did not possess the ability to read or write in any of the available languages. Bloomfield referred to something called "semilingualism" at various points throughout the course of his investigation. However, he did not address the many other issues that can contribute to semi-lingualism, such as the lack of language regulations, educational methods, and sociological factors.

In a second piece of research, a linguist from Scandinavia by the name of Skutnabb-Kangas asserts that in her opinion, 'semilingualism is more of a political term than it is a scientific or even linguistic one.' There is a little question that problems relating to politics and society play a big role in the fact that languages are not developing to their full potential. (Kangas, 1984).

The lack of fluency in two or more languages is referred to as semilingualism. The phrase can be used to describe either an individual or a group. Additionally, it may allude

to a lack of development in the capability of acquiring more than two languages, particularly in children. The condition these children are in is a reflection of this phenomenon. The children may be referred to as bilingual in general, but in terms of their degree of skill, they are considered to be semi-lingual. This is due to the fact that they have not yet demonstrated mastery of either of the languages that they are learning. (Olajoke & John, 2013)

In one of his studies, O'Neil (2004) explained that one of the greatest concerns that parents of bicultural children have is the possibility that their child's exposure to two or more languages at the same time may cause him or her to become confused or may hinder his or her ability to develop natural language skills. The topic has been sensationalized by recent news reports that have focused on bilingual children who are struggling academically as a result of insufficient proficiency in either their first or second languages.

Bilingualism Versus Semilingualism

Following the same train of thought as bilingualism, the concept of semilingualism was introduced as a type of bilingualism in a study that was carried out not too long ago. A person is said to have partial bilingualism if they are proficient in both languages, but only to a limited degree. This sub type of bilingualism is known as "partial bilingualism," and it describes the situation described above. This low level of competency is related to the fact that the language systems of both NL(native language) and NNL(nonnative language) are underdeveloped, and a person who is bilingual is unable to comprehend the complexity of both of these linguistic systems. This low level of competency is related to the fact that the language systems of both NL and NNL are underdeveloped. The condition known as "semilingualism" describes a child's language development as falling short of its full potential and is referred to by the term "semilingualism." The child needs a great deal more exposure to both the NL and the NNL in order to achieve the stage of "balanced bilingualism" that was described earlier. Additionally, the child needs to practice using both languages. (Khan, 2019).

Factors

According to Clintion et.al, (2014) when we examine semi lingual kid evaluation, we are referring to a child who frequently exhibits a very intricate collection of conditions. Immigration, poor parental education levels, and poverty are common examples. These kinds of challenges have additional effects, such as restricted access to high-quality education, acculturation pressures, and, later, stereotypes, all of which can be complicated by instructors' lack of readiness to work with bilingual pupils, language learning in connection to immigration, parent education, and poverty (Clintion et.al,2014).

Farooq & Shafiq (2011) conduct research to look at the several elements influencing the academic achievement of secondary school pupils in a big Pakistani city. The study's respondents were 10th-grade students (300 males and 300 females). Data on multiple aspects of students' academic achievement was obtained by means of a questionnaire-based survey. The results of the study revealed that parents' educational level and socioeconomic level (SES) significantly influence students' general academic success as well as success in the disciplines of Mathematics and English.

Cenoz(2013) proposed as an explanation that with bilinguals in immigrant communities there are many additional different factors that have the potential to play an important role in foreign language outcomes but have not been systematically considered in investigations. . These variables have the potential to play a significant part in the

outcomes of the language learning experience. To begin, there is a high possibility that academic outcomes and background factors will be confused with one another in studies of students who have a family history of immigration. Indeed, a person's socioeconomic standing, cultural capital, and the educational attainment of their parents are significant predictors of the educational outcomes that their children will have. Moreover, the educational attainment of the person's own grandparents is also a significant predictor. In addition, these factors differ significantly between students who come from immigrant families and their classmates who were born in the country.

According to Salo and Karlander "It is striking that semilingualism emerged from a marginal position, but nevertheless travelled into the limelight of national policy making. For this reason, it is appropriate to address the following questions: What conditions could help explain why the idea of semilingualism gained this kind of traction? What factors made it impactful in Swedish policy making? The present study points to a number of interdependent causes"(Salo & Karlander ,p.134).

Hoff (2003) studied the notion that different language-learning experiences land factors lead to different rates of productive vocabulary development in children from families with different socioeconomic status (SES) was put to the test. Two time points spaced by 10 weeks were used to record the naturalistic interactions between the 2-year-old children of 33 high-SES and 30 mid-SES mothers and their offspring. The foundation for estimating the changes in children's productive vocabularies between the first and second visits, as well as the characteristics of maternal speech at the first visit came from the transcripts of these interactions. The size of the productive vocabularies of the high-SES children increased more than that of the mid-SES children. The differences in maternal speech characteristics as a function of SES fully explained the variation. These findings have implications for how the environment affects a child's development, which are discussed.

This study is an attempt to analyze the factors that contribute to the phenomenon of semilingualism, and the researcher structures her investigation of the phenomenon in a particular way. The study begins by defining semilingualism and stating its primary causes. After that, a particular focus has been placed on factors that are creating semi-lingual students. In order to accomplish this goal, participants have been drawn from ten departments at the University of Narowal, which is located in Pakistan. This study watches ten students from each class, and determines the fundamental challenges that these students face when they are in the process of learning. This essential linguistic phenomenon has also been examined from the perspective of its general drawbacks in this study, which aims to provide a full understanding of the topic. In order to achieve this goal, the researcher travelled to observe classes at different institutions and worked to identify the socio -economic factors that contribute to the creation of semilingualism in the students of those institutions .

Material and Methods

The qualitative research method was utilized to examine the data critically and analytically. A multi-method approach to research has been used because it has a higher potential for understanding complex phenomena in the social world, seeing the world through multiple lenses, and employing diverse methodologies that better respond to the various stakeholders of policy issues than a single method or approach to studies.

Target Population

The students who speak Urdu while learning English as a second language made up the target population for this research study.

Sampling and Data Collection Procedure

In order to collect data for this research study, the researcher used a technique called the Simple Random Sampling Method. This study has selected two Institutes from Narowal. The 100 students who are currently enrolled in Alshifa College and university of Narowal are considered as participants of this study. The reason to choose sample from different institutes is to see the difference between the students. Data collection from two different places provided diversity among Students. Students enrolled in their first year are the focus of this research.

For the purpose of data collection, the researcher used random sampling method to select the sample of 100 students from these institutions. Researcher has conducted semi-structured interviews with students and instructors as well. Moreover, to get detailed knowledge about the given study, the researcher has also used observation method.

Research Framework and Underlying Theories

This study used Threshold Hypothesis by Cummin as the major framework for this research. Data was also analyzed and interpreted by using capitalism.

Threshold hypothesis has its main focus on learning second language and its proficiency. According to it, there are certain threshold levels namely minimum, moderate and maximum in case of the present study. These levels define a certain level of proficiency in particular language. Threshold hypothesis points out the cognitive effects of language L2 in relation to L1 that states a certain language proficiency in L1 is required to even reach minimum threshold level in L2. Positive and negative cognitive aspects in relation to factors like academic background and socioeconomic status of students has been seen. Term semilingualism has been defined using these levels in particular. Threshold hypothesis has been used to find how and why the faculties of language learning are hindered during academic process.
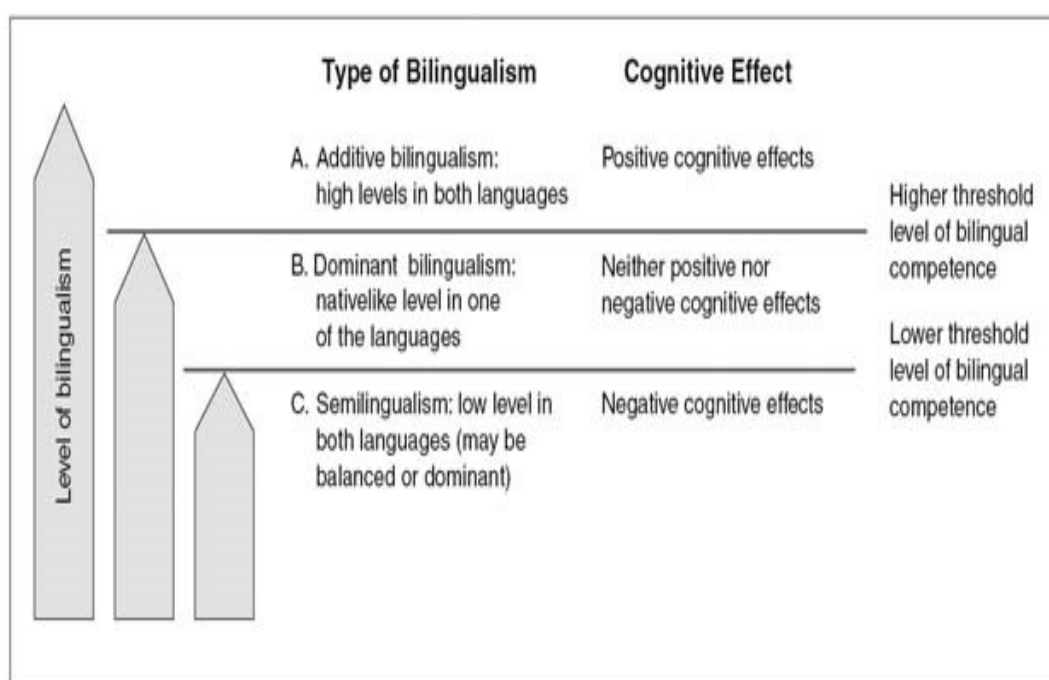
Fig. 01(Encyclopedia of language and education)

This hypothesis provides a framework for understanding why students from lower economic background might be more super sensitive to semilingualism.

Results and Discussion

This particular study on the topic 'Socioeconomic Background as a Factor Contributing in Semilingualism' has been carried out by using Threshhold Hypothesis by Cummin that mentioned that when people talk about deficiencies in learning or semilingualism ,they should not blame the child's natural abilities .Instead ,we should look at social,political and economic factors .Its not the child inherently lacking it might be due to unfair circumstances or the lack of good schooling .And this is what this study observed while conducting this research that student's low economic background limit their access to rich linguistic environment to reach the necessary threshhold levels in either language . The data is also interpreted by using capitalism.

To analyse this phenomenon Interviews of 100 students (between the ages of 18-22 who enrolled in first semester) have been conducted to complete the study by using simple random sampling technique in order to avoid partial analysis and for bringing objectivity to the study. Side by side, many students have been observed silently while delivering lectures to their classes at University of Narowal. For observation, a check-list constructed by the researcher has been used. The above mentioned research techniques helped to provide equal chances of participation of Muslim and Non-Muslim students, male and female students from all social classes.

In the present research work, data is analyzed qualitatively. The study observed and listened to the interaction taking place in the class rooms of two institutes such as University of Narowal and Alshifa Institute of Health Sciences Narowal. As it is important to follow all the research ethics in a study so, firstly researcher had set a time with instructor to discuss why he wanted to sit in that class then they decided schedule of classes to carry out research work. According to Oliver (2010,p:22) "There may be research situations where adult participants, for a variety of reasons many not understand the nature of the research process, and hence cannot consent to their participation in the research from a position of understanding. Such students may involve adults who have had relatively little academic formal education or participants who have a different mother tongue from the researchers; although they may have second language competence".

Then, the collected data has been maintained to extract results to test the differences between groups based on various demographic characteristics. The first section covers demographic information like gender, age, educational attainment, region, and employment status. The questions about knowledge made up the second part of the interviews. All of these inquiries have touched on socioeconomic issues have been focus for this study

Data showed that many students from low-income backgrounds exhibited semilingual traits as they faced difficulties achieving complete mastery in both their first language and their second language (English or Urdu). The study revealed that students tended to have reduced opportunities to be in situations where language development thrives. Students from homes lacking access to proper literacy materials and quality early-childhood education, combined with few opportunities to practice speaking, developed these language disparities. As marked through student interviews, they revealed points of uncertainty and a sense of doubt because of their linguistic limitations, which further

deteriorated their academic engagement and performance levels. The students who came from well-established socioeconomic backgrounds gained increased language exposure from books and technology as well as educated family members. Students from better socioeconomic backgrounds exhibited superior control of language and better thought expression during educational and informal talk.

socioeconomic factors that produce semi-lingual students in the universities of less developed areas in Pakistan are lack of education, low economic status, less exposure to standardized media that use second language as a medium as well, lack of awareness about basic human rights that hinder the progress of students and ultimately produce semi lingual students if they somehow manage to go to universities for getting higher education. It is observed that the only form of social media is Tiktok which is used by the less privileged people mostly.

Under capitalist ideology language proficiency serves as valuable linguistic capital which enables people to reach better career opportunities and educational achievements and gain social prospects. Students in Narowal with semilingualism face academic challenges because the school system awards higher standings to pupils who excel in English or Urdu. The low language abilities of these students should not be viewed as individual deficits as they reveal capitalist system preferences that only benefit those who can invest in proper language education.

Conclusion

Hence, it provides a pile of information to study the language problems faced by second language learners in Pakistan. This study discusses that how socio-economic factors are playing a prominent role in producing half-lingual students in Pakistan. There are various factors which are affecting second language learning process but here we are going to look into socio-economic factors only.

Recommendations

The communicative method of teaching can be used by the teachers to develop the schema of language's vocabulary in their students' brains. For this, they can use images, pictures actions and role plays to lessen the problems of fluent speaking. They can also be given chances to speak about their local festivals and topics of interest equally. Peer group learning can be used by the teachers by merging the more fluent and less fluent students, the low class and the high class by arranging discussions and by making groups randomly. They must respect the regional accents and dialects of English and other languages and should not make fun of the students while listening. As there are many varieties of every language that are spoken all over the world and their differences have been accepted now-a-days. The exposure to world, digital media, libraries and supplementary materials may also reduce semi-lingualism especially in underprivileged areas .

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