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Potential Benefits of Bilingual Teaching in Learning History

Abstract   *Bilingual education has been controversial since the beginning of educational programs, there is still uncertainty among school leaders while deciding the medium of instructions for their system especially while measuring its impact on students' learning. This research evaluated the outcomes of bilingual education for the subject of History. The target population of this research was grade V students studying in a private school In Pakistan. This study explored benefits of bilingual teaching by adopting Urdu language explanation and discussion for clarifying details. Scaffolding and Translanguaging were applied during the history periods and positive results were recorded after the intervention., benefits were observed on the overall academic performance, class participation and conceptual clarity of the experimental group who were taught with bilingually. Conclusively, bilingual instructions proved to be aid that supported learning.*

Key Words: Bi-lingual, Trans-language, Scaffolding, ELL (English language learners)

Introduction

Language is the base of communication and it is the medium of instructions for disseminating knowledge. Whatever discipline, subject and content may be, it required instructional language for the delivery. Pakistan has multiple systems of educations operating simultaneously in which the medium of instruction has always been a major challenge for the educators, weak conversational skills hinder the academic performance of learners because they face dual issues: first is to understand English as an instructional language and second is to further comprehend the contents. In Pakistan specifically, the education of an individual is measured broadly with the yardstick of language acquisition and ones' ability to communicate in English. Students proficient in English language are more likely to be accepted by the job market hence youth with less competency in the language of English remain deprived.

Menken and Solorza (2014), in their research, argued over the implementation of education reforms in foreign languages and reported that Education reforms whether it was Education for All or No Child left behind, all turned out to be language implementation policies and became invasive programs in the USA. Due to the state compulsion, when these were implemented, state schools turned their bilingual teaching programs into English language instructional plans. This in turn demotivated the bilingual learners. Moreover, NCLB was implemented with English instructional approach where bilinguals were completely ignored as the schools discontinued their bilingual teaching methods in the name of implementing NCLB. Short, Fidelman and Loguit (2012) recorded persistent under achievement as a result of executing these reforms under the passed legislation.

Many previous researches have reported that student's self-efficacy about their competencies has an impact on their motivational level for learning. Students with low self-efficacy experience difficulty in comprehending and understanding. On the other hand, those who think of themselves as more efficacious perform better. Schunk (1991) reported in his research how higher sense of efficacy leads students to perform those activities which resulted in extensive learning. Their belief in themselves, that they could learn, enhanced their competencies in learning material, moreover, resulted in an increase in efficacy and motivation. In present times teaching has become much more challenging due to the heterogeneous classrooms particularly during the subjects in which explanation, discussion and participation requires English proficiency. Yamat, Maarof, Maasum, Zakaria and Zainuddin (2011) in

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their study concluded that, it is not enough to be just proficient in the English language, teachers should also be competent to teach these subjects using English. When we consider a History lesson, it requires language competency along with the content knowledge as it is a nationally focused subject in which students have to learn about people, places and events with a national point of view. In this way students struggling in second language lag behind the others because of several factors including language incapability, difficult concepts and unfamiliar content.

This experimental research which is basically aimed to find out the potential benefits of bilingual instructions is carried out for the subject of History with 25 students of grade V. Experimental design is applied to this research in which content of History was taught bilingually (English and Urdu) for one full academic term. The analysis presented medium to large effect sizes in the performance of the treatment group with the intervention of bilingual instructions and scaffolding techniques for the description and explanation of the content. The applied framework offered favorable outcomes for the academic results of students who were taught History topics both in English and Urdu supported with techniques like scaffolding and translanguaging.

Literature Review

Pakistan has a rich heritage of culture and languages for the masses, even Urdu is the second language amongst non- native language speakers, so English eventually falls on the third place in language learning. Majority of students learn English at school and it becomes the language of classroom. It is a general perception that learning English is the only solution to educate a person and students struggling with English are left with least hopes for succeeding in core subjects. In State schools of Pakistan, Urdu and other provincial languages are used as the medium of instructions. English on the larger scale, is actually introduced from upper primary level. If we consider the Education Reforms in Pakistan like Education for All also became controversial because of the medium of language since this reform was implemented in a foreign language which the masses could not comprehend moreover language environment and linguistic ability were completely overlooked during the execution of the said reform. Shamim (2011) argued that donor agencies consider English as the de facto language for their growth and a huge amount is consumed in taking measures for improving English proficiency of recipient nations, specifically in the education field.

Issues of Medium of Instructions in Pakistan

A researcher at the University of Birmingham, Prof Chris Kennedy, in support of mother tongue learning elaborated that, young children should be provided knowledge in their mother tongue and not in a language that is secondary to them. (Coleman, 2010). Shamim (2011) argued that unfortunately English is considered to be the indicator of social standing and family background, in the research it was recommended to develop bilingual education programs so that learners can achieve proficiency both in English and Urdu, this attempt would minimize the language apartheid between the English and Urdu medium learners. According to Coleman (2010) those who can afford the fee, prefer the private institutions for their children. Their objective is to give their child access to better and improved learning material where their child can learn under the supervision of qualified teachers.

Ijaz, (2011) in her research raised the issue of medium of instructions and precisely highlighted the concerns. She stated that instructional language should endorse students learning, according to her, medium of instruction should improve the cognitive ability of the students rather than creating superiority or inferiority complex among the students.

Conceptual Understanding and Role of Language

Kleyn and Garcia (2019) insisted on bilingualism as an additional feature for students learning. The authors considered bilingualism as a dynamic feature of language since the speakers add new linguistic features like words, affixes, constructions, meanings to their repertoire. Colin Baker termed the *Inner*

Thinking as fifth language competence, after speaking listening, reading and writing. which helps in the acquisition of concepts. According to Baker (2001) inner speech can be put under the title of 'speaking' which enables a bilingual to use both languages as thinking tools.

Previous studies have witnessed positive results in students' conceptual learning when Scientific and Mathematical topics were taught in their native language. Kocakulah, Ustunluoglu and Kocakulah, (2005) reported having misconceptions of scientific topic of Energy on the students who learnt the topic in foreign language as compared to those who learnt the same topic in their native language. Yamat et.al (2011) highlighted their reservations for teaching Mathematics and Science in English, they argued that these subjects were taught in English due to the implementation of educational reforms from 2003, however the educators had concerns for the psychological, social and cognitive effects of learning these subjects in a foreign or second language.

Translanguaging

Creese and Blackledge (2010) argued on the use of monolingual instructional approach and support the use of bilingual strategies while dealing with bilingual students. To support their argument, they have emphasised environment of the learner by using the term language ecology. Macswan, (2014) supported the usage of Translanguaging. According to the author, another favorable strategy for bilingual students is the code switching. It is the alternation between two or more languages in the process of conversation. It is practiced in a bilingual classroom where the teacher and the students frequently use the alternative language understanding and better interaction. Since 1980 translanguaging has been utilized to facilitate the bilingual speakers, linguistics found code switching as a systematic process rather the common perception of haphazardness by using translanguaging. Gulzar and Qadir (2010) concluded that in order to decode the message for the better understanding of the learner code-switching is an effective strategy not a hurdle or obstacle in learning.

Hornberger and Link (2012) supported their stance of translanguaging. According to the research findings of university of Limpopo, once they offered bilingual BA program (English and in African language Sepedi) students studying in bilingual BA program exceeded in performance as compared to their peers who took BA monolingual program these students scored high within the university, within south African higher education. Internationally it was termed as a successful program.

Scaffolding in Educational Settings

Scaffolding strategy has its roots from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in which he defined ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) what children can do by themselves and what further they can achieve with competent assistance (Yamat et al., (2011). The scaffolding enables a learner to internalize new concepts by building on his prior knowledge. Scaffolding activities are the ones which students are unable to perform independently and can do with the assistance. In elaboration for scaffolding Hammond and Gibbons (2005) termed it is a task-specific support, scaffolding techniques include show and tell, think aloud discussions, visual aids, giving time to talk, pause and ask and other interactive techniques. Teacher presents information in chunks and give extra time to the students to think and respond. This response can be completely in (English), blended with native language (L1), completely in L1 or maybe in a bilingual manner.

Moreover, Rodríguez, Solsona and Capdevila (2017) proposed the use of a collaborative model in which teachers should provide scaffold instructions. In their research, the social studies and Spanish language teachers used common assignments and applied strategies which helped students discern how the concept of History can be explained with the support of Spanish language within the use of target language.

Bilingualingualism

Bilingualism has been defined as a linguistic ability to use two languages as a medium of instruction in part or for all of the school curriculum (Nelson, 2003; Cohen, 1975). Suwanarak (2014) stated that bilingual teaching program helps in two ways: it increases English proficiency and improves academic performances since the instructions are given both in the primary and the secondary language. Bialystok (1986) found positive impact of bilingual teaching as it increased the problem-solving ability of the learners by providing control of linguistic processing.

Jeanne and Nelson (2003) emphasized that the goal of Dual language programs is to achieve proficiency in two languages by getting dual language instructions; in a classroom which comprises English speakers and native speakers of other language.

As argued by Colin (2001) "Language cannot be divorced from the context in which it is used. Language is not produced in a vacuum; it is enacted in changing dramas. As props and scenery, audience, co-actors and actresses, the play and the role change, so does language. A pure linguistic or psychological approach to two language competences is not sufficient. Communication includes not only the structure of language (e.g. grammar, vocabulary) but also who is saying what, to whom, in which circumstances." (pg.12)

Communication in second language could depend on the understanding of the children which they develop through the first language. The second language differs grammatically and its lexical utilization however with the support of teachers, children can enhance their competence of using second language. Language mixing is also seen as a support mechanism for enabling students to learn the content with the mix of second language and native language.

Alanis and Rodriguez (2008) derived positive results of dual language program as it solved many issues faced by the students in United States by empowering both the Spanish and English native speakers, it improved academic performance bringing strong sense of self-identity among the participants of the research study carried in USA.

Baker (2001) At the elementary school level second language instruction needs proficient language teachers, appropriate resources material along with teachers' approach to create a learning environment. Cummins (2014) posits that students make cross – linguistics connections in a bilingual program, focusing on the effectiveness of the bilingual immersion programs the researchers recommended to nurture linguistic, cognitive and social growth strategies.

Scope of the Study

This study will bring insight into the education sector, policymakers and school leaders to use multiple ways of supporting non-native English learners for the reason that their performances are compromised due to the language barrier. Bilingual teaching can benefit learners specifically in their lower classes as there is evidence of positive impact of bilingual instructions on students who struggled to learn subjects in English as a foreign language.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

With the support of literature and to get the answer to the questions raised and following hypotheses are formulated:

H1- There is a strong impact of bi-lingual instructions on students' academic achievement.
H2- There is conceptual clarity with bilingual instruction in learning content of social studies.
H3- There is a positive relationship between bilingual instructions and class participation.
H4- There is a positive relationship between bilingual instruction and student's confidence.

Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual Framework :
Implication of Bilingual Strategies for
students' performace in Social Sciences
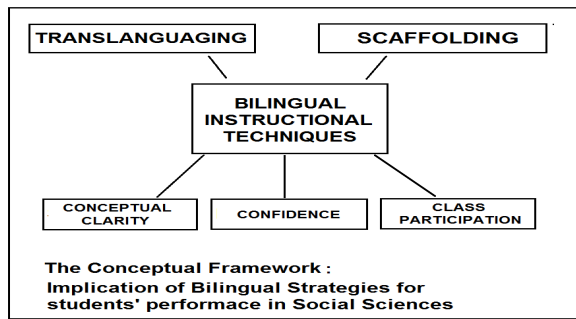
Research Methodology

This study applied experimental research of single group pre and post-test on the students of grade V and compared the data before and after the treatment. The subject of social studies was taught in English as a medium of instruction from previous years. According to the subject coordinator and social studies teachers, students usually consider this subject dry, boring and theoretical because of the element of history and geography which makes it denser and challenging for the students. This study piloted the experiment on 25 students of grade V who were given the support of translanguaging and scaffolding for the explanation during their social studies period for a term (4 months) and their assessment scores were compared before and after the experiment for the same group.

The participants of this research study belonged to a private school of Karachi, which was a small setup of 315 students from grade I-V. The first term assessment score was taken as the pre-test scores which was before the treatment whereas the post-test was administered after the intervention of 4 months of bilingual teaching. However, the prior permission was obtained from the management for experimenting with grade V students, who were taken as the treatment group. During the first semester (August to November) the social studies teacher continued with the previous practice of English language instructions for the concept, explanation and class discussions. Their assessment scores were collected in December as pre-test .During the second semester (January to April) they were given instructional support of translanguaging (switching from target language to native language) and scaffolding support strategies during their social studies classes for the whole semester. At the end of the session both the semester results were compared for the same group, moreover teachers' perceptions were obtained for the treatment group through a questionnaire related to the self- efficacy of students being taught with the support of Bilingual instructions.

Self-efficacy Assessment Scale was developed on Likert scale for the teachers to give the students' feedback under the themes of student's participation, understanding of concept and level of confidence. Likert scale ranging 1 to 3 was made bearing 1 for disagree, 2 for not sure and 3 for agree. Teachers involved in teaching social sciences were taken into the loop for getting their input pertaining to the belief of bi-lingual instructional approach with low performing students. The instrument comprised of various items related to conceptual clarity, participation and confidence. The items and questions representing these variables were determined after the detailed discussion with experience teachers mostly teaching social studies at the targeted level of education.

Data Analysis and Results

SPSS reliability analysis was applied to the data collected from teachers and the value .717 Cronbach indicates that it's reliable. Parametric testing was applied for this research.

Reliability and validity Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.717	12

H1-There is a strong impact of bi-lingual instructions on students' academic achievement.

When the results of subject competency were evaluated, it emerged that with the intervention of bilingual strategies and related activities the participants of the research showed improved results. Table 1a presents the results of the academic evaluation incorporating pre and post-test performance of the group.

Table 1. Social Studies Marks for the Pre and Post-Test

Student s.no	Pre-test % out of 100		Post-test % out of 100
1	34.5%		59%
2	37%		61.5%
3	41.5%		65.5%
4	29.3%	Intervention of	51%
5	43%	Bilingual instructions	65%
6	27%	applied from	63%
7	39%	August 2017	53%
8	31%	To	62%
9	29%	January 2018	68%
10	20%		59.5%
11	33%		57.2%
12	23.5%		63%
13	27%		64.5%
14	19%		56%
15	37%		60%
16	29%		51.4%
17	27.1%		66%
18	42.5%		59%
19	38.5%		51%
20	26%		56%
21	40%		63%
22	31%		50%
23	41%		50%
24	26%		52.3%
25	33.5%		61%

H2-There is conceptual clarity with bilingual instruction in learning content of social studies.

Table 2. One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Conceptual Clarity	25	9.8000	2.61406	.52281

Table 3. One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Conceptual clarity	18.745	24	.000	9.80000	8.7210	10.8790

From the above table, it is concluded that mean understanding of the sample is 9.800 which is received from 25 non-missing observations. The test value was 0, the test statistic of one sample T test

=18. 745.The df for the test n-1= 24.two tailed p value corresponding to the test statistic is .000. The difference of mean between the observed and expected value is 9.8000 since p-value is less than .05 level of significant which is .000, therefore we accept the research hypothesis and conclude that there is a strong impact of bi-lingual instructions on students' academic achievement.

H3-There is a positive relationship between bilingual instructions and class participation.

Table 4. One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Participation	25	10.4800	1.35769	.27154

Table 5. One-Sample Test

		Test Value = 0			
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Participation	38.595 24	.000	10.48000	9.9196	11.0404

Tables 4 and 5 display the results of participation based on the score achieved during the intervention. The mean for the participation was 10.48 from 25 samples, test value was 0, one sample t test result was 38.595 and df was 24 with two tailed value remained .000 .The difference of mean between the observed and expected value is 10.48, the tabulated p value less than .05 with level of significance .000 hence the research hypothesis is accepted showing a positive relationship between the bilingual instructions and class participation.

H4-There is a positive relationship between bilingual instruction and students' confidence.

Table 6. One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Confidence	25	9.6000	1.35401	.27080

Table 7. One-Sample Test

			Test Value = 0		
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	t	Df Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Confidence	35.450 24	.000	9.60000	9.0411	10.1589

Mean depression score (9.60 ± 1.35401) was lower than population normal depression score p<.05 (it is p= .000) Depression score 95% CI, (10.15 to 9.04) than a normal depression score of 0, t (24) = 35.45, p=.000) Hence the research hypothesis is accepted indicating that there is a relationship between bilingual instructions and students' confidence.

Discussion Conclusion

The participants in this research belonged to non-English proficient background. They had English as second or third language as there were students with mother tongue Gujrati, Sindhi and Punjabi, for them Urdu was the second language and English was the language of instruction at school. For this study teachers formulated plans with the provision of bilingual instructions in which students got the liberty of using Urdu for Code switching, teachers applied translanguaging and scaffolding strategies

to transfer the social studies concept in an interactive classroom. Students were at ease in responding to the teacher's questions and were encouraged to participate in classroom discussion and activities using both the languages (English and Urdu)

Scaffolding strategies developed students into self -regulatory learners and made them independent, problem solvers. As the students started showing interest and displayed confidence in their learning, the teacher minimized the code switching and gradually increased the use of second language which did not burden the students. According to the teachers, students hesitate to participate in discussion due to short of vocabulary and lack of expression when they were allowed to share their insights in Urdu, they enjoyed taking leads in discussion and wanted to succeed from their counterparts in replying first. Moreover, the teachers' translanguaging had made the content easier for them whereas when the lecture in only in English the class became passive. In this experimental research, teachers switched codes to help students learn the difficult terms which were actually meant and applied for scaffolding students learning.

Shamim (2011) raised an argument over the use of language for instruction and covering the issues, challenges and possible solutions of medium of instructions she suggested Multilingualism and content and language integrated learning for the primary level. In support of CLIL, Hajer and Maaike (2000) reported that issues with medium of instructions reduced the subject competence of the students due to imperfect understanding. through the fact that teachers simplify content beforehand. For this research the participants were given the easier vocabulary for learning the dense content which enabled them to gain better understanding of the concept. Teachers used para-phrasing techniques moreover switched to Urdu terms to explain the difficult vocabulary because no matter what mother tongue students speak, they are able to understand Urdu. Since the complex concepts were explained with the help of Urdu, students understood the content and were able to learn it better. Teacher used Trans-language in which the meanings of difficult words were explained in Urdu which made their concepts cleared. It was an integrated communication support program.

With the support of bilingual instruction, students understood the content and took the courage to participate in class discussion which was found lacking in them while they were sitting in mainstream sections. Since the language gap was filled with easier vocabulary and terms in mother tongue, student's participation increased to a great extent. The post test results presented in table 1a and 1b indicated the enhanced level of academic achievement with the intervention of bilingual instructions. The overall impact was their increased interest, improved comprehension and greater participation.

Conclusively, bilingualism was found as an aid to support learning. Although till the 20th century the educators considered bilingualism as interference in academic and intellectual development, however researches have witnessed this interference as a blessing rather than a handicap that supports the learning process. The human brain is capable of keeping both the languages active even if only one is being used, bilingualism forces the brain and strengthens the cognitive muscles.

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