

**RESEARCH PAPER****Effectiveness of Bilingual Practices in English Language Classroom:
Perception of the Teachers and the Students****¹Fazeelat Niaz, ² Syeda Maryam Fatima* and ³ Muhammad Farooq**

1. Lecturer, Department of English Women University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Bagh Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan
2. Lecturer, Department of English, University of Kotli, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan
3. M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Education, Mohi-ud-Din Islamic University, Narian Sharif, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan

Corresponding Author

maryam.fatima@uokajk.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This research studied the perception of Pakistani English language (EL) students and teachers regarding the effectiveness of bilingual practices in the EL tutorial room. The data collection tools were questionnaires and interviews. The participants were 120 students and ten teachers at WUAJK, Pakistan. Analysis of data revealed that there were resemblances in the perceptions of the teachers and the students about the effectiveness of bilingual practices. The study showed that Pakistani EL students and teachers were willing to use L1 practice in the English language tutorial room. Teachers and students believed that the medium of instruction must be English. They should keep the limited use of L1 practice in EL classrooms whenever it is beneficial to relieve anxiety and create a comfortable environment for the participation of reluctant students and students with low confidence. So, using bilingual practices is effective in English language learning. The limited use of L1 assists in learning of English language and does not reduce the English language learning process.

Keywords: Bilingual, Effectiveness, Perception**Introduction**

The English is a universal language. The English language is well-known throughout the world. Additionally, the internet and international media are in English. Roughly 49% of the population can communicate in some form of English. Pakistan is the third largest English-speaking population in the world. Pakistan's official language is English, which is also used in courts, schools, and other professional settings. In Pakistan, English is taught as a required subject and is used as a medium of instruction in institutions at all levels. Teachers also switch between different codes while teaching English (Gulzar & Qadir, 2010, p. 413). Many schools in Pakistan make modest attempts to teach students how to speak English while also attempting to teach other subjects. The Government institutions have certainly worked at a lower level. The students of Government institutions need to improve in English and better in Urdu. In Pakistani madrassa medium of instruction are Urdu and Arabic. English is not taught as a course. Students of these institutions have a very limited field in their practical life. So, these students are not competent enough in their professional life as the students of other institutions.

Literature Review

The history of L1 practice in English (L2) classrooms quickly reveals repeated but regular changes in it (Miles, 2004, p. 3). Learning English (L2) has always been facilitated by using L1. Several hundred years ago, bilingual education was the "norm," with students learning through translation. Miles (2004) stated that using L1 practice while learning English (L2) at the time was almost universal and easily accepted. Many researchers have emphasized the maximum use of the targeted language, including Krashen (1985), who

claimed that language acquisition occurs through the maximum exposure to Comprehensible input and that L1 should therefore be forbidden in the classroom. He added that there is a direct correlation between comprehensible input in L2 and proficiency, so the entire lesson should be taught in English (p. 14). On the other hand, Many teachers and students believe that L1 practice in the classroom is essential (Schweers, 1999, p. 6).

Bilingualism is the phenomenon of individuals and communities, how two languages are used, and how they are learned. Bilingualism is the ability to speak two languages, and many bilinguals grow up speaking two languages simultaneously. However, Gottardo (2008) says that bilingualism is acquiring two languages concerning each other. Teaching in two languages can also called bilingualism, mainly to promote learning in students to learn a new language.

On the other hand, Bhatia and Ritchie (2008) said that individuals or groups of people who gain knowledge and use more than two languages are bilinguals. Bloomfield (1935) defined bilingualism as a native-like control of two languages. If this definition is true, the number of bilinguals worldwide will reduce. In opposition to this definition, Macnamara (1969) said that a bilingual has minimum competence in second language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening (cited Abudarham, 1987). In Pakistan, most children acquire the English language in school and become bilinguals. Children of immigrants also grow up with two languages. These children speak their parents' native language at home while speaking another language at school; for example, in the U.S., children speak their parent's language at home and English at school. However, sometimes children are not immigrants, but they grow up with two languages. So, bilingualism is present mainly all over the world.

There are many myths or misconceptions about bilingualism. Some people think that two or more two languages confuse children. However, it is not true because children mostly mix two languages during learning. Steiner and Hayes (2009) said that it is normal for children to mix two languages as they learn them; this is part of the natural learning course (p. 6). Many instructors feel that using L1 causes a delay in English language learning, and students take more time to become proficient in the English language. However, language delay is common in children. Steiner and Hayes (2009) said that the reality is that delayed speech or language development is a common developmental challenge.

Another misconception about bilinguals is that there is only one room in a child's or adult's brain for one language. However, in many countries, children grow up with two languages or more than two languages without formal learning; for example, in Pakistan, children grow up with two or more than two languages. In Pakistan, the home language is Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi. However, the language of communication in Pakistan is Urdu, and many children learn Urdu as their home language at a very early age as their first language. In Pakistan, children learn English at the graduate level.

Sometimes students do not show interest in English language classrooms where teachers provide maximum exposure of the English language. Therefore, the practice of switching from one language to another may grasp the attention of students toward the lesson. Bilingual practices make the classroom atmosphere relaxed for the students. Both teachers and students use L1 in certain situations. Auerbach (1993) suggests

There are occasions for using the mother tongue in the L2 classrooms: negotiation of the syllabus and the lesson; record keeping; classroom management; scene-setting; language analysis; presentation of rules governing grammar; phonology; morphology; and spelling; discussion of cross-culture issues; and explanations of errors(cited Schweers, 1999).

Bilingual practices in English language classrooms reduce students' anxiety, and students feel free to express their ideas. Whenever they do not know a particular lexical item in L2, they can switch to L1 and then learn. When teachers use L1 practice to help students understand English vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation and students learn quickly with the help of L1. The second language can be learned by raising awareness of the similarities and differences between L1 and L2. When there are similarities between students' L1 and targeted language, then the role of L1 is to facilitate understanding the meaning and structure of the English language.

There are controversial views about the use of L1 in English language classes. In English (L2) classrooms, bilingual practices are often seen as negative. The bilingual practices may harm L2 because instructors use L1, and the exposure of English (L2) input reduces, which causes hindrance in English language learning. Bilingual practices make students dependent on L1, and they do not try to speak English. Bilingual practices do not encourage students to use English (L2). Shareen (2010) stated that "students find L1 as a hindrance in the learning of English because it won't allow ample practice of English for learning". The maximum exposure to targeted language is more helpful in EL learning, just as Krashen had stated. Bilingual practices can be harmful when there are differences in students' first and target languages. So, literature has shown that some researchers prevented and many supported using L1 in L2 classes.

Material and Methods

Mixed Method Research

The current research is both quantitative and qualitative. The present research focused on the perceptions of teachers and students on the effectiveness of bilingual practices in English or L2 in the classrooms. The data was collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The research was conducted on English Language skills classes students and (EL) teachers at the graduate level in the Women University of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Bagg (WUAJK).

Population

The current study's population was the students and teachers of (EL) at the graduate level in (WUAJK).

Sample

Random sampling is used for the selection of participants. Through this, every individual gets an equal chance of selection. The sample of 120 students was selected from the targeted population of EL students at WUAJK). Details of the sample are the following:

Forty students (semesters II and IV) from the Department of English.

Forty students (semesters II and IV) from the Department of Education.

Forty students (semesters II and IV) from the Department of International Relations.

Ten teachers who were teaching English language skills at the graduate level.

Method of Data Collection

Data was collected through questionnaires from 120 students in (EL) classrooms. Semi-structured interviews were taken from ten selected teachers of English language skills. Teachers' perception was taken through interviews. It consisted of eight questions.

Results and Discussion

The results have displayed the perception of students and teachers toward bilingual practices in English language classrooms. Here, the first part represents data obtained through a close-ended questionnaire from the students. The next part was related to the teacher's perception of using Bilingual practices in English classrooms.

The data shows that using bilingual practices in English language classrooms would greatly and effectively facilitate the English language learning process. 83% of participants confirmed that these practices are very effective in learning English. Moreover, in Figure (b) that 67% of students agreed those bilingual practices are necessary for English language classrooms. The data in Figure (c) shows that most students (60%) perceived that limited bilingual practices are necessary for English language classrooms. Figure (d) is the response to question 4, in which most students agreed that these practices reduced exposure to the English language. The participants favored the limited use of bilingual practices in EL classrooms. Conversation plays an essential role in language learning. Figure (e) displays that most students (92%) preferred the use of bilingual practices because these practices encourage students to conversation in English language classrooms.

Most of the students preferred these practices because these make instruction easier for teachers. Using bilingual practices helps teachers comprehend knowledge of the language very effectively. The result in Figure (g) indicates that most students (44%) confirmed that these practices make students dependent on L1. The students may become too relaxed and lose interest because of too much dependence on L1. Teachers should only use bilingual practices to explain complex grammar rules and concepts. The result in Figure (h) points out that teachers use bilingual practices to explain grammar rules. Many teachers use L1 practice at the start of the lecture to make the students comfortable and stress-free. Most students confirmed (79%) that these practices help students transfer knowledge into English. Students understand concepts in L1 and practice in the English language. Thus learners achieve fluency when they are able to practice and understand English with the help of L1.

Findings shows that 67% of students confirmed that these practices help them fully understand concepts in English. According to the students' perception, L1 does not hinder the English language learning; instead, it speeds up the language-learning process.

Most students (82%) confirmed that bilingual practices make students comfortable and reduce anxiety in English classrooms. In Figure (m) (50%), participants responded that the use of L1 practice should be limited and according to the specific need of the students. Figure (n) shows that using bilingual practices in English classrooms leads to delays in English language learning. Bilingual practices may cause a delay in English learning because of dependence on L1. Figure (o) shows that most students favored that only English should be used as a medium of instruction in English language classrooms. The reason is that the maximum input in the English language is necessary for learning the English language. So, in the participants' view medium of instruction should be English.

Findings

According to the current study, 66% of students supported using bilingual practices. On the other hand, all teachers, except Teacher 1, agreed that these practices have a minor but significant role in the classroom for learning English. Moreover, this research has shown that limited L1 practice can be valuable in teaching the English language at the graduate level.

According to teachers and students, learning English requires maximum exposure to the language. In the opinion of the teachers, students rarely have the chance to use the

English language outside of the classroom, so classroom exposure to the language should be maximized. Ellis (1984) argued that L1 usage ought to be minimized to the possible extent. Additionally, he claimed that in a context where English is used, the classroom is the only place where students can receive the maximum exposure to the language.

This study identified some contexts in which most students (86%) and all teachers except one preferred to use L1, such as to clarify cultural concepts. Moreover, it explains complicated word meanings, complex grammatical structures, and classroom management. The majority of the students and all the teachers concurred that using L1 excessively in the classroom can hinder the process of learning English, so its use should be restricted and dependent on the individual needs of the students. According to Llorca (2006), the L1 practice should be used sparingly. He also pointed out that teachers must provide as much input in English as possible because the classroom is the only place where students can be exposed to the English language.

The study also found that all teachers and 78% of students preferred English as the language of instruction. But in view of teachers and students, the limited use of L1 practices is also necessary for English language learning classrooms.

According to Schweers (1999), most students believed using their L1 could make them feel more comfortable and confident in the classroom. The current study also reveals that 92% of students and most teachers prefer using bilingual practices in English language classrooms because it makes students feel more at ease and encourages discussion with teachers and classmates.

According to the current study, 82% of students and all teachers apart from Teacher 1 believed that bilingual practices lessen students' anxiety in English-language classes. In the same way, Auerbach (1993) confirmed that "its use reduces anxiety, enhances the affective environment for learning" (p. 29).

According to Nation (2003), the L1 practice offers a common and efficient way of quickly grasping the meaning and concepts of the English language, and 67% of students and all teachers believed that bilingual practices help students understand complex concepts and transfer knowledge from one language to another.

Conclusion

The current study's findings suggest that both students and teachers accept the value and efficacy of using bilingual practices in the classroom and are willing to do so. In the opinion of both teachers and students, the teaching and learning of the English language are aided by bilingual practices. Additionally, there is a positive attitude among teachers and students towards the limited use of L1 practices in English language classrooms. These techniques work well in the English language classroom when used sparingly and carefully. Students must be exposed to English, but L1 practices can be helpful when examples and explanations in English need to be revised to help students understand certain concepts. For effective learning and understanding, teachers can help students by contrasting the grammatical structures of the L1 language with those of English. The current study shows that using bilingual methods in English language classrooms is successful. Hopefully, these results and suggestions will encourage additional research and insights in this field by encouraging more people to recognize the value of bilingual practices in English language classrooms.

References

- Abudarham, S. (eds). (1987). Terminology and typology. *Bilingualism and the Bilingual: An interdisciplinary approach to pedagogical and remedial issues*. (p. 2). Great Britain: NEER- NELSON.
- Atkinson, D. (1993). Teaching in the target language: A problem in the current orthodoxy. *Language learning journal* vol.8, issue 1.
- Carson, E., & Kashihara, H. (2012). Using the L1 in the L2 Classroom: From the Student's Perspective. City University, Hiroshima.
- Hashemi, S. M. & Sabet, M. K. (2013). The Iranian EFL Students' and Teachers' Perception of Using Persian in General English Classes. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 2 (2),142–152.
- Joan. Fingon, Sharon, H., and Ulanoff, (2012), *learning from culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms: using inquiry to inform practice*.
- Krashen, S.D. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*. Longman: London and New York.
- Llurda, E. (2006). *Non- native language teachers: perceptions, challenges and contribution to the profession*. United States of America
- Miles, R. (2004). *Evaluating the Use of L1 in the English Language Classroom*. University of Birmingham, United Kingdom.
- Nation, P. (2003). The role of the first language in foreign language learning. *The Asian EFL Journal*, 5(2), 1-8