Abstract – Present study aims at investigating role of bilingualism in terms of learning behavior of bilingual students in the setting of multilingual society of Pakistan. Bilingual population can be expected in any region where different language groups are dwelling and interacting mutually. When in Pakistan, the individual and the societal bilingualism are common. In present study the term bilingualism can be referred in a wider sense in terms of a multilingual society. The study results exhibited that pragmatic side of bilinguals in understanding different situations is quite stronger than that of monolinguals; where role of L1 (mother tongue) is positive in learning L2 and vice versa because it has relations with positive outcomes in cognitive behavior.

Key Words – Bilingualism, L1 intervention, multilingual social setting, cognitive behaviour, ESL learners

1 Introduction

Since last three decades or so, experts and scholars in the field of education, sociology and psychology have been sharing the same point of view and working on the solution of the problems in bilingualism. They have different opinions regarding the effects of bilingualism on a second language learner. Many scholars including Rao, T.S. (1971), Anand, C.L. (1972), and Chickermane (1971) have same opinion that a speaker of two languages is different in many prospective from a speaker of one language in his academic performance and learning behavior. Extensive studies have been carried out in order to study the impact of bilingualism in a society on the language learning behavior of children in general. Some studies have confirmed that there is a positive impact of being bilingual whereas some researches proved the existence of negative relation between the two.

Ellen Bialystok (2002) is of the view that experience is the most powerful tool that enhances working of brain and its pattern and reveals improved learning. He further states a problem that the bilinguals who use two languages regularly face attention control problem. Further, he propounds the idea of how bilinguals control a limited vocabulary of each language as compared with the monolinguals. In order to strengthen his point of view, he presents his findings from the standardized ‘Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test scores’; where 971 children were selected whose age ranged between five and ten. He succeeds in arguing that the bilingual were deficit when researched the lexical access. He further states that so far as the meta-linguistics tasks are concerned, the bilinguals showed an upper hand whereas the tasks related to grammar and its understanding, were not well performed by them. The bilinguals
did not address the tasks of memory related to ‘verbal recall’ well while they were positive in performing tasks of ‘executive control’.

It has also been observed that a bilingual child can perform well because of the exposure of different languages and cultural systems. It discards the effects of Scale Theory and focuses that bilingualism brings positive cognitive abilities on individual e.g. better performance in the area of metalinguistic, phonological awareness, and detection of grammatical errors than monolingual counterparts. Bilingual child can competently communicate in two languages, can express himself in both languages; and has great capacity to think critically, creativity and objectivity.

As far as bilingualism and students’ academic performance is concerned, low level of the students’ proficiency in L1 influences their development of L2 as well as their academic performance; and sometimes this performance is derived from their culture diversity and traditional values. These cultural and traditional values hinder the full participation in school tasks which leads to inability to express students’ own opinion in target language eventually leading them to abandon the school.

A study carried out by Ron Crosby & Randy Prescod under the title; Effects of Bilingualism on Cognitive Abilities, unearths the relationships of faculties of mind, education and proficiency between both languages i.e. L1 and L2, in bilingual children. It is stated that if a child learns a language in his early years he learns it faster with other positive gains with reference to the researches of other researchers. It is clearly stated that bilingualism is as significant for brain as good food is essential for life. Concept formation, classification, creativity and analogical reasoning are also quite related to the outcomes we get through bilingualism.

As assumed earlier, researchers have been discussing their views about the bilingual students and their mental faculties for 30 years related to intelligence and education. In past, it was believed by experts that a bilingual has two or more languages at the same time that is why he is not intelligent at all. Since last three decades, the belief has been changed up to a great extend with the new-fangled researches in this area. The result of a research conducted on Japanese and English students revealed that bilingual students are better than monolingual students when the comparison of their cognitive abilities was judged by ‘Eiken level test’. It is concluded that bilingualism offers advantages over others monolinguals- having positive mental flexibility than the monolinguals, having concept formation greatness, enjoying wide range of information and carrying excellent verbal ability.

The worth noting aspect is- what are the effects of bilingualism on academic achievements. The bilingual children always have an advantage over their monolingual counter-parts as they can easily switch one language and the other; and they can understand and involve themselves in their parents’ culture efficiently. Bilinguals have strong intellectual growth. As Jim Cummins (1991) said if one talks about cognitive benefits it is related to the pace and acquisition of second language. Learning second language in childhood has an advantage of successful acquisition early and easily with positive results. Bilingual children have strong ability to solve problems and better control on their linguistics processes. Currently, linguists believe that switching linguistic codes will make child mind more flexible and increase cognitive abilities of mind. In addition to that, bilingualism was a great worry for parents in the past. They thought that this process would slow down the memory of their children and confuse them; but with passage of time this thought has changed. Numerous researches have been done with a purpose to observe the relation between bilinguals and their cognitive abilities which show that learning two languages makes mind flexible and it also shows the superiority of bilingual on monolingual. It also demonstrates that bilinguals have great mental abilities; they know how to use language; their mind works faster as compared to monolinguals. They have good IQ level which confirms that raising children in bilingual setting makes cognitive ability of child strong.
Linguists and experts occupy diverse opinions about the effects of bilingualism on the learning behavior of students; some believe that bilingualism has positive effects while others are not agreed and take relation of bilingualism on learning behavior negatively. In 1920s, multiple studies on the basis of intelligent psychometric tests were initiated. It was believed that idea in learning the two languages at the same time is not appropriate as it promotes intellectual disadvantages and confusion about the languages (Diaz, 1983). There are negative effects of bilingualism observed in many researches; that is why many linguists believe in negative opinion about it on power of learning in children (Grosjean, 1982). Bilingual children muddle up two languages because they are confused about their use and as a result it leads towards decrease in intelligence (Saunders, 1988). Bilingual children are claimed to be confused in the use of two languages, therefore ‘bilingualism is an additional dissatisfying element in the minds of bilinguals. (McLaughlin, 1978). On linguistics skills, bilingualism is a negative influence as it is seen that one language creates hurdles in learning another language and human beings cannot go beyond their potential level of learning a language (Appel&Muysken, 1987). So far as personality and identity development are concerned, it appears that bilingualism has negative impact on them (Appel&Muysken, 1987). It was taken in the past that the bilingual children are language handicap and could not identify themselves to which social group they were related to, so they became socially isolate. Bilingualism was serving as a negative addition for bilingual children altogether because problems of children were considered the outcome of bilingualism (Bialystok, 2001).

It is proved in many studies, oppositely to the earlier beliefs, that there exists a positive relation between bilingualism and cognitive functioning; and in attempting intelligence test, bilinguals’ scores were found higher than those of monolinguals (Hamers& Blanc, 2000). It appears as empirical evidence, when it was observed which group of individuals was having cognitive advantage over the other, that bilingual children possess better faculties of mind as they performed flexibly well in high control tasks (Bialystok, 1999). Though the Japanese bilingual students were found to be good in analyzing complexity structure and verbal transformation, yet they were not good in performing grammatical and vocabulary tests (Lee, 1996). Another study demonstrated that academic performance was enhanced when mother tongue was introduced in classroom for instructions (Lee, 1996). Some linguists advocate the positive effects on intelligence of bilinguals and claims that bilinguals enjoy cognitive advantages over monolingual counterparts (Saunders, 1988). Many a linguists and researchers claim that bilingualism is helpful in acquiring a new language as it facilitates learning behavior; moreover bilinguals are intellectually developed and motivated (Grosjean, 1982). The bilinguals can perform code switching from one language to another that gives added flexibility in doing cognitive task while monolingual do not possess this characteristic (Peal & Lambert, 1962). Mental flexibility is appeared, concept formation is added and diversified set of mental abilities is gotten, when a bilingual uses two languages. With this they performed better in basic skill tests of math, English and social studies (Robinson, 1992). For the survival of human intelligence, bilingualism serves as an essential food (Baker, 1988). It is observed that bilinguals are better in understanding of a text on account of their usage of two languages at the same time (Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1995). Bilingual children possess an advantage over the monolingual children that is metalinguistic awareness (Fromkin, Rodinan, &Hymes, 2003). Bilingual proficiency is one of the advantages over their counterparts and they show outstanding judgment skills when they acquire minimal language proficiency level in both languages (Cummins, 1981).

In Pakistan, however, only two or three studies have been undertaken on effects of bilingualism on students’ learning behavior. The present study is intended to focus on fulfilling this gap up to some extent, by observing the learning attitude of students in bilingual context where Urdu is termed as L1 and English as L2. It is an initial study research carried out on some randomly selected graduate
students at Lahore city in Pakistan. Its scope is restricted to the learning behavior of students studying at graduate level (age group 18-20). The main objective of the current study is to examine the effect of bilingualism on learning behavior of students.

2 Research Methodology

2.1 Data collection

From the list of graduate colleges in Lahore city, 9 colleges were selected randomly. The questionnaires were filled to get the required information as a research tool, given in Appendix. The researchers got the required information from a population of 100 students by randomly selecting them. The investigators visited the graduate colleges selected for research personally and taken the results back after providing appropriate time.

2.2 Data Analysis

Question 1: Does sentence structure of Urdu help in building sentences of English?

Response: 60% were strongly agreed, 20% showed agreement, 8% were neutral, 3% were disagreed and 9% were strongly disagreed.
Question 2: Are cognates helpful in memorizing new vocabulary in both languages?

Response: 39% were strongly agreed, 30% were agreed, 21% were neutral, 7% were disagreed and 3% were strongly disagreed.

Question 3: Do you rely too much on Urdu meaning while learning vocabulary of English or vice versa?

Response: 55% were strongly agreed, 36% were agreed, 8% were neutral, 1% were disagreed and 0% were strongly disagreed.
**Question 4:** Does pronunciation of Urdu words help in learning pronunciation of words of English e.g. May, Mile etc?

**Response:** 38% were strongly agreed, 32% were only agreed, 11% were response less, 8% were disagreed and 11% were strongly disagreed.

**Question 5:** Do you think in learning new concepts of other subjects, both L1 and L2 are helpful?

**Response:** 21% were strongly agreed, 24% were only agreed, 24% were response less, 13% were disagreed and 18% were strongly disagreed.
**Question 6:** Do you feel L2 is a burden for your mental abilities?

![Responses chart]

**Response:** 3% were strongly agreed, 14% were agreed, 5% were neutral, 40% were disagreed and 38% were strongly disagreed.

**Question 7:** Do you use words of one language into other, while speaking consciously or unconsciously?

![Responses chart]

**Response:** 44% were strongly agreed, 50% were agreed, 1% was neutral, 5% were disagreed and 0% was strongly disagreed.
Question 8: Does comparison and contrast of both languages enhance your mental capabilities and you learn faster?

Response: 20% were strongly agreed, 22% were agreed, 36% were neutral, 15% were disagreed and 7% were strongly disagreed.

Question 9: Do false friends (same sound words in both languages having different meaning e.g. “suffer”) help in memorizing and adding words in your vocabulary?

Response: 33% were strongly agreed, 44% were agreed, 8% were neutral, 7% were disagreed and 8% were strongly disagreed.
**Question 10:** Does use of two languages (bilingualism) create problems of understanding in acquiring new concepts?

![Responses](image)

**Response:** 8% were strongly agreed, 6% were agreed, 19% were neutral, 41% were disagreed and 26% were strongly disagreed.

**Question 11:** Does learning two languages cause cultural identity problems and you become confused about their usage?

![Responses](image)

**Response:** 7% were strongly agreed, 15% were agreed, 15% were neutral, 29% were disagreed and 34% were strongly disagreed.
**Question 12:** Do you mix both languages because you lack the appropriate items in one language but have in the other language?

![Bar chart showing responses to the question about mixing languages.](chart1.png)

**Response:** 39% were strongly agreed, 33% were agreed, 19% were neutral, 3% were disagreed and 6% were strongly disagreed.

**Question 13:** Does use of two languages improve your verbal IQ ability?

![Bar chart showing responses to the question about improving verbal IQ.](chart2.png)

**Response:** 19% were strongly agreed, 37% were agreed, 9% were neutral, 8% were disagreed and 27% were strongly disagreed.
Question 14: Does knowledge of L1 provide any basis for L2 learning?

Response: 19% were strongly agreed, 23% were agreed, 21% were neutral, 33% were disagreed and 4% were strongly disagreed.

Question 15: Does tacit knowledge of vocabulary of L1 and L2 help to explain views on different situations?

Response: 25% were strongly agreed, 24% were agreed, 24% were neutral, 14% were disagreed and 13% were strongly disagreed.
Question 16: Do you think students feel easy to learn through Grammar translation method?

Response: 24% were strongly agreed, 17% were agreed, 7% were neutral, 28% were disagreed and 24% were strongly disagreed.

Question 17: Do you think while writing students think in Urdu first and then translate into English?

Response: 20% were strongly agreed, 43% were agreed, 4% were neutral, 6% were disagreed and 27% were strongly disagreed.

Here is given the analysis of the Questionnaire and the responses in the nutshell to enhance the understanding of the results gained through this research work. There are 17 questions in all on the issue in discussion. All the questions need separate discussion as every individual question exposes new facts concerning the issue. There are a few questions where the responses are contrary to expectations of the researchers but mostly the hypothesis has been confirmed. First 5 questions regarding contribution of L1 (Urdu) in the learning of L2 (English) confirm role of L1. In response to
Question 6 regarding L1 a burden has been denied by the students. In response to Questions 7-9 concerning contribution of L1 and transfer of knowledge & skill from L1 to L2, hypothesis has also been confirmed. In response to questions 10-15 regarding negative impact of learning L2, negative impact of the knowledge of L2 has been rejected. In the last two questions related to use of Grammar Translation Method (GTM) for the learning of L2 (English) the students gave mixed response which indicates the drawbacks of the GTM or the inefficiency of the teachers to positively exploit the potential of the GTM to get the desired results.

3 Conclusion

It was deduced that bilingualism is influencing or effecting learning behavior positively as it is obvious from the responses of bilinguals themselves. It is helping in acquiring sentence structure in both languages efficiently and vocabulary is developing in both languages with the help of ‘cognates’ and ‘false-friends’. The earlier speculations that bilinguals are handicapped do not seem to be true; bilinguals have better cognitive functioning and meta linguistic awareness i.e. knowledge and use of languages. It is not found in the research that acquiring second language is a burden on mental faculties of individuals. Mental flexibility is an added point in their performance as use of two languages enhances their mental capabilities in learning faster. New concepts related to other disciplines (concept formation) are not affected by bilingualism; in addition to that they develop understanding about them. Bilinguals are not confused about two languages and take them as separate entities; and they do not feel cultural identity problems with the use of two languages. So the research question ‘Bilingualism is influencing Students’ behaviour’ but surely in a positive way.

Bibliography


