

# Multilingual Education: A Catalyst for Professional Pathways

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## Abstract

*Pakistan faces challenges in balancing language policy, instructional practices, and socio-cultural diversity to compete with the world. With over 7000 languages globally, Pakistan only focuses on two languages: one national language, i.e. Urdu and then the official language, English. This research aims to analyze the impact of multilingual education on students' academic performance, particularly for students in Pakistan, and its implications for future career directions. This research uses Cummins' Multilingual Education Framework as the theoretical lens in examining 40 participants, who are university students and teachers. The results demonstrate the importance of the ongoing advocacy for languages and suggested policies for effective MLE. Additional Chinese, German, Russian, and French languages are also shown to further career opportunities. Findings also reveal that 80% of the participants favored Multi-Language Education as it is essential for career development and professional growth. The study also showed that multilingual education could improve students' cognitive skills, social interactions, and economic growth. Further, this research helps the emergence of multilingual education in Pakistan, which meets the needs of dual and multilingual students living in the globalized world.*

**Keywords:** Additional Languages, Cognitive Abilities, Linguistic Diversity, Multilingual Education, Professional Pathways.

## Introduction

This study examines the effects of Multilingual Education on learners in Pakistan, a South Asian nation with over 70 linguistic varieties, to support a diverse, multilingual population. This situation, where people use languages like Urdu, English, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pukhtoon, Balochi and the rest, implies the importance of multilingual education. Moreover, the need for other languages like Chinese, German, Korean, French, and so on must be addressed. When the students complete their studies and want to explore their experience in other countries, they must learn those languages. Therefore, the study has been designed to raise awareness of the use of those languages, which can be helpful in the students' working lives.

In this paper, the researcher highlights issues of language policy, teaching/learning processes, and socio-cultural contexts in education in Pakistan. In line with the language-in-education policy that

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requires the use of Urdu and English in the country, the concerns overlooked other languages like Chinese, German, Korean, French, and others. This can lead to the linguistically and culturally diverse students' academic achievement and socio-emotional development.

Multilingual education is acknowledged worldwide as a factor contributing to students' cognitive, social, and economic future, and it is another frontier that needs to be researched in Pakistan. Nevertheless, Pakistan's MLE has many challenges that significantly impact students' academic and employment opportunities.

This research seeks to fill existing gaps in our understanding of Bilingual Education in Pakistan by investigating the efficacy of multilingual education in improving students' performance and their impact on future career pursuits. It also attempts to make useful recommendations concerning the relationships shared between language culture and education in Pakistan.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research will inform the challenges people typically face in their career track by examining the impact of multilingual education on professional trajectories. The results will help Pakistan's national goals for economic and educational growth by recommending the creation of inclusive language-in-education policies. Additionally, by emphasizing cultural diversity and linguistic inclusivity, this study will help people from a variety of language backgrounds to succeed academically, maintain social cohesiveness, and improve their socio-emotional health. In the end, this study will spur much-needed revolutionary reform in Pakistan's educational system, creating a more prosperous and fair learning environment in a world that is growing more interconnected daily.

### **Research Objectives**

The research objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate the relationship between multilingual education and academic achievement among students in Pakistan by examining the impact of language diversity on educational outcomes.
2. To identify and analyze the significant challenges and barriers to effective multilingual education in Pakistan, including language policy, instructional practices, and socio-cultural diversity.
3. To explore and recommend policies and programs that promote inclusive and equitable multilingual education in Pakistan by enhancing career pathways for linguistically diverse students.

### **Research Questions**

This study will focus on the following research questions

1. What is the relationship between multilingual education and professional pathways among students in Pakistan?
2. What are the significant challenges and barriers to effective multilingual education in Pakistan?
3. What policies and programs can be used for inclusive and equitable multilingual education in Pakistan?

### **Statement of the Problem**

The critical concern in the education system of Pakistan is how equality should be maintained in linguistic diversity to improve their academic and professional sections. However, acknowledging

the significance of multilingual learning, the country's language-in-education policy erases a few crucial languages, such as Chinese, German, Korean, and French, that reduce students' linguistic and cultural self-representation. This, coupled with poor provision of multi-language learning and socio-cultural diversity, retard the cognitive, social and even the economic development of students. Therefore, multilingual education in Pakistan faces critical issues affecting student achievement and employment. This study aims to investigate the impact of multilingual education on professional pathways: searching for valuable methods and interventions for more coherent and fair education in Pakistan.

## Literature Review

After several publications on multilingual education, researchers have emphasized promoting linguistic diversity in educational institutions for students' successful career pathways. Several scholars have argued against the marginalization of minority languages in Pakistan's education system. Different efforts have been made to raise awareness about the importance of multilingual education and address the challenges that linguistically diverse students face.

Lekhala (2024) explores the relationship between language policy and education, emphasizing the need for inclusive policies to ensure equitable access to quality education in diverse societies. It examines successful multilingual education models, addresses implementation challenges, and provides insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers to shape the future of education in a multilingual world.

Ashraf et al. (n.d). examine language practices in Pakistani educational settings, considering the country's multilingual society. The study examines how educators and legislators deal with language-related concerns, such as the function of regional languages, English and Urdu. The paper makes the case that careful planning that considers local circumstances is necessary for language-in-education programs to be effective and emphasizes the intricate connections between language, identity, power, and education.

Oliinyk et al. (2024) highlight the importance of multilingual education in cultivating cross-cultural awareness, linguistic mastery, and career prospects. They also explore the impact of multilingual education on communication skills development. Multilingualism is crucial in today's globalized world, requiring advanced communication skills and language knowledge.

Brisk and Kaveh (2019) analyzed that teachers must prepare to work with students from different language backgrounds. Initially, the school language makes an effort to know their students, understand bilingualism and second language learning, and learn the disciplines they will teach and the language needed to express the content of the disciplines. These teachers can create quality curricula, classroom environments, and instruction that support learning, regardless of students' proficiency in the language of instruction. The recommended knowledge base and instructional approaches for these kinds of contexts should be an opportunity to reform schools to align them with the reality of 21st-century schools.

Babino (2019), in his dissertation '*Multiple Pathways to Multilingual Investment: A Collective Case Study of Self-identified Mexican Students in the US,*' investigates the reasons why Mexican kids in the US have a high level of multilingual involvement despite anti-immigrant rhetoric and monolingual/monocultural educational ideals. Formal Spanish education, close family ties, and a strong sense of Mexican ethnic identity were interconnected elements promoting multilingualism. Years of education in Mexico, formal Spanish classes, and dual language instruction were other important factors. The results point to several ways that Spanish speakers can preserve and improve their language skills in English-dominated environments, emphasizing the need for

educators to support healthy multilingual identities and investments through focused language instruction and the confrontation of sociolinguistic ideologies.

Koçba and Dilara (2016) provide insight into the educational experiences of underprivileged kids and families who speak minority languages and have little formal schooling. The study examines how literacy and language influence power relations and social identities.

The above-cited findings shed light on the importance of multilingual education. However, further study is required to determine how multilingual education affects students' career paths in Pakistan.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the relationship between multilingual education and career pathways among students in Pakistan.

### **Participants**

The study involved 40 participants, including:

- 20 students from the Universities of Islamabad
- 20 teachers from the same institutions

### **Sampling Technique**

Purposive sampling was used to select participants from different areas representing diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

- Questionnaire for students and teachers
- The Questionnaire included both open-ended and close-ended questions.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Questionnaires were distributed to students and teachers through online and offline channels. Almost 60 questionnaires were distributed, from which we received 40 authentic responses.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic and content analysis, whereas quantitative data was examined through graphs and charts.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Participants gave informed consent. Anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured, and data will be stored securely.

### **Limitations**

Due to Geographic limitations, researchers have taken the data from the universities of Islamabad only, which may seem to be a limited sample size. Moreover, there are Potential biases in self-reported data.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This investigation used Cummins' Multilingual Education Framework (Cummins, 2000). The framework promotes linguistic diversity and multilingual education to foster academic

achievement and socio-emotional well-being. The framework provides a solid foundation for exploring the complex relationships between multilingual education, academic achievement, and professional pathways in Pakistan. Cummins emphasizes the interdependence hypothesis, which posits that mastery of one language can facilitate the acquisition of additional languages, particularly when these languages share cognitive and academic foundations. Furthermore, this framework highlights the socio-cultural dimension, advocating for an inclusive educational approach honoring students' linguistic identities and cultural backgrounds. By correlating multilingual proficiency with enhanced career opportunities, this theoretical perspective offers a systematic understanding of how educational systems can leverage linguistic diversity to address the needs of a globalized workforce. This study utilizes Cummins' principles to investigate the challenges within Pakistan's multilingual education framework and recommend strategies for developing inclusive and effective policy implementation.

## Results

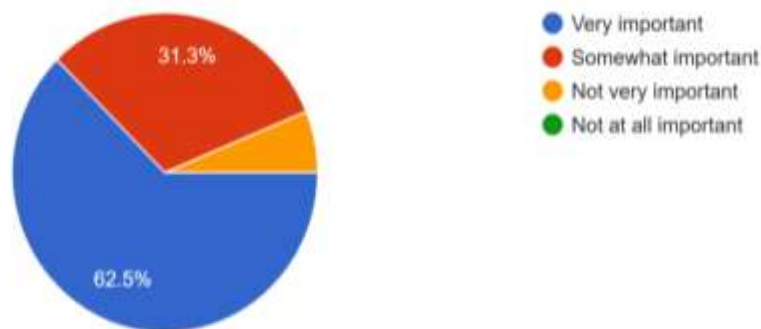
The questionnaire responses reveal significant benefits of multilingual education. Most respondents (80%) noted its role in enhancing communication, cognitive skills, and cultural adaptability. The Questionnaire was divided into 5 main sections. The first section was about demographics, which related to the participants' general background.

For the second section, related to language proficiency, the participants were asked about the importance of language proficiency in their profession or area of study. The responses received are reproduced in below:

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**Figure 1: Language proficiency importance among participants**

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The participants highlighted several positive impacts of multilingual education on their professional and academic pursuits. A recurring theme was the enhanced ability to communicate effectively, both in written and verbal forms. One respondent shared, "multilingual education has significantly broadened my research scope and enhanced my ability to engage with diverse academic communities." Others noted that it helped them excel by making complex concepts easier to grasp and by improving their understanding of cultural diversity. As another participant put it, multilingualism "widened perspective, improved written/verbal communication skills, and enhanced understanding of cultural diversity."

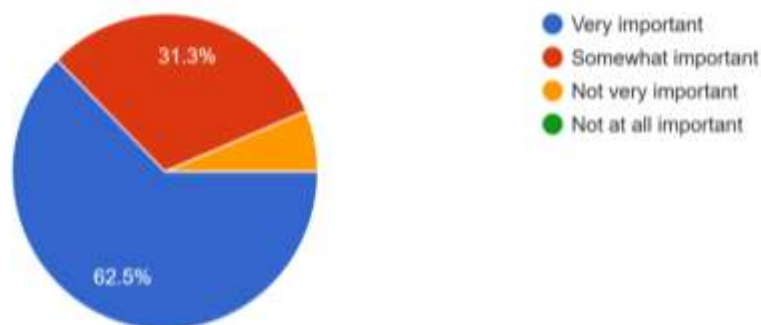
Furthermore, some respondents emphasized the role of multilingual education in boosting confidence and facilitating global engagement. For instance, one participant remarked, "it helps to coordinate on an international level," while others appreciated the advantage of being able to interact in multiple languages simultaneously.

The next section was about career opportunities and challenges. The participants were asked how important is language proficiency in their current or desired career? This led to following responses as mentioned in figure 2.

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**Figure 2: Impact of multilingual education on career opportunities**

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Despite its benefits, participants faced notable challenges in navigating multilingual education. These included issues with fluency, vocabulary, and accents, which affected their ability to communicate effectively. As one respondent stated, "since I am not a native speaker of English, I had to learn it throughout my academic life," highlighting the additional effort required to achieve proficiency. Another participant mentioned difficulties in expressing viewpoints due to language barriers, while others noted that such challenges occasionally impacted their professional opportunities, such as securing a teaching position.

A number of delegates underlined the value of bilingual education, especially in light of globalization. "we should implement multilingual education in our schools and colleges," suggested one respondent, while another discussed the wider advantages of multilingual education, saying that "it is very important to be multilingual—it opens many horizons." The participants' acknowledgment of multilingual education as a tool for both professional and personal development, as well as a way to promote international cooperation and communication, is demonstrated by these replies.

Basically, multilingual education tries to improve cognitive skills, academic performance, and cultural skills, which is very much related to Cummins' theory. Participants also acknowledged its role in expanding research capabilities and enhancing global engagement.

On the contrary to that barriers include communication issues and limited access to multilingual resources, highlighting the need for supportive frameworks which is definitely highlighted in Cummins' theory.

Need for the implementation of the structured multilingual curricula as well as promote equitable language policies and enhance teacher training for linguistically diverse classrooms. These things will help to achieve the ultimate goal of MLE.



## Discussion

Cumming's theory stresses that multilingual education is significant for developing cognitive, academic, and socio-cultural skills; it not only identifies the interdependence of language proficiencies but also underscores the pragmatic aspect of multilingual competencies that allows individuals to gain familiarity with diverse points of view. Here are the survey responses, thought through the lens of this theory:

### Positive Impacts of Multilingual Education

**Cognitive and Communicative Skills:** Respondents widely acknowledged multilingual education's role in enhancing communication skills, with comments like:

- "It helped me communicate in a more effective manner."
- "Made me confident."
- *Positive impact:* "Widened perspective, improved written/verbal communication skills."

These insights align with Cumming's argument that multilingual environments develop higher-order language processing and improve linguistic interdependence, making learners more versatile in their communication.

**Academic and Professional Growth:** Participants highlighted few benefits in academic and professional growth:

- "Multilingual education has significantly broadened my research scope and enhanced my ability to engage with diverse academic communities."
- "Helps to coordinate on an international level."

These responses reflect how multilingual education facilitates access to diverse knowledge pools, enhancing research capabilities and cross-cultural competencies, as proposed by Cumming.

**Socio-Cultural Connection:** A recurring theme was the ability to connect across cultural boundaries:

- "Enhanced understanding of cultural diversity."
- "Since Urdu is the national language and English is official, both have significance in terms of education and earning a livelihood."

The Cumming's theory asserts that multilingual proficiency supports not just intellectual but also socio-cultural adaptability, which is very much evident in these observations.

### Challenges in Multilingual Education

The challenges noted by participants indicate barriers to fully leveraging multilingual education:

#### Fluency and Accent Issues

- "Accent, fluency, and writing."
- "Some people are unable to communicate properly."

This shows Cumming's caution about the uneven development of language skills among learners and the need for supportive environments to address these gaps.

#### Difficulty in Academic and Professional Settings

- "I have a good understanding of subjects, but I don't speak fluent English in normal conversation, that's why I didn't get a teaching job."
- "Since I am not a native speaker of English, I had to learn it throughout my academic life."

These experiences underline the cognitive demands and social pressures identified by Cumming, particularly in multilingual societies where certain languages dominate professional spaces.

### Recommendations for Multilingual Education

The suggestions from participants reinforce Cumming's advocacy for structured and inclusive multilingual programs:

- We should implement multilingual education in our schools and colleges.
- It is very important to be multilingual. It opens many horizons.

These insights reveals the need for a curriculum that fosters gradual, well-supported acquisition of multiple languages, balancing national, official, and global languages as suggested by Cumming.

### Conclusion

The study results align with Cumming's theory, supporting that multilingual education. It also offers significant cognitive, professional, and socio-cultural advantages. However, challenges like fluency barriers and language hierarchies highlight the need for supportive educational frameworks. The advantages of multilingual education in a variety of contexts can be maximized by implementing structured multilingual pedagogies, resolving linguistic disparities, and fostering intercultural understanding.

Multilingual education provides substantial cognitive, professional, and socio-cultural advantages. To fully leverage these benefits, it is essential for Pakistan's education system to address linguistic disparities and implement structured multilingual programs. These initiatives have the potential to enhance students' global competitiveness and expand their socio-economic opportunities.

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