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English Language Learning in Multilingual Settings: Challenges, Advantages, and Pedagogical Implications

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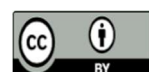
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Abstract

This paper seeks to delve deeper into the myriad and, in some instances, inherent challenges that learners of English as an additional language grapple with in multilingual contexts. It takes a look at how complexity is brought about by the crossing of linguistic interference, increasing cognitive load for learners juggling more than one language. This illustrates the cross-linguistic transfer benefits or benefits to intercultural competence improvement. To enable engagement with English learners and teachers from a multilingual educational set-up, the study will use a mixed-methods approach. This is in order to gauge what perceptions and understandings students and educators have in relation to the learning experiences. In this regard, it identifies that linguistic interference and cognitive load are the major barriers, while pedagogical significance is to highlight how multilingual benefits can be leveraged. This way, the findings contribute to a richened understanding of pedagogical practices that aim at maximizing the multilingual benefits and reducing the challenges the phenomenon of multilingualism poses. This study holds far-reaching implications for educators in the sense of teaching. In this direction, the understanding may allow the educators to understand and take into consideration the complexities of teaching English well in multilingual settings.



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Page | 140

Abstract

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Keywords: English language learning, multilingual settings, cross-linguistic interference, cognitive load, intercultural competence

Introduction

Language acquisition is already a complex process, as pointed out, but in a multilingual environment, learners are further tasked with having to adaptively switch and navigate through several languages (Baker & Wright, 2017; Bialystok, 2021). This task calls for high cognitive flexibility and language proficiency (Costa and Sebastian-Galles, 2014). The course of English learning under multilingual contexts is subject to high attractiveness, in particular, with the wide instruction in many multilingual settings, where English is the global lingua franca (Crystal, 2022). This situation ushers in a unique set of challenges and potential benefits, which are the focus of this research.

One of the main hindrances in learning English among multilingual learners is cross-linguistic interference, where the learner's competence in his or her native language(s) hampers understanding or the ability to produce what is being asked for in English, the target language (Odlin, 1989; Cook, 2021). For instance, learners whose environments of acquisition are those where Spanish is spoken may find it difficult to articulate English phonemes that do not exist in the Spanish language or, while constructing an English sentence, they can even carry grammatical rules of the Spanish language. There may also arise some problems that go beyond the level of vocabulary owing to linguistic interference. It normally arises when learners put words that are directly from the first languages and are totally unsuitable or unnatural in English (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). Such errors can lead to a block in effective communication and lower the learning process (Lado, 2022).

Another major burden could be the cognitive load since management would be in bilingual mode. For a learner, this includes using memory for new vocabulary, concepts of grammatical structures not known by the learner, and acquiring the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Paap, 2019; Prior and Gollan, 2021). This burden of cognitive load increases when learners engage with several languages at the same time, thus reducing the pace of learning and at many times overwhelming the learner. Learning English in a multilingual environment presents various benefits. Contributing to Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis view on language development is another advantage that cross-linguistic transfer results in (Cummins, 2008; Jessner, 2002). The theory assumes that the cognitive and linguistic skills developed in a language support the learning of another language. This, in essence, means that multilingual learners may have a cognitive advantage while learning English, for they would draw from the multitudinous languages in facilitating its acquisition. Further, learning English in a multilingual environment helps develop understanding and appreciation of the diversity of the different cultures from which students come in order to develop even further their intercultural competences (Byram, 2009; Deardorff, 2022). This will bring a heightened level of motivation and interest to the students, as they are not just learning a foreign language but actually have a view of other cultures and ways of living. Despite being challenging, learning English in a multilingual environment has huge potential for enabling numerous advancements. Understanding these dynamics may guide the pedagogical practices that will reap the most out of multilingualism while helping to tackle the downsides. Proper support and teaching approaches, only with the help of multilingualism, can help learners in multilingual contexts successfully undertake their English language learning journey. Apart from these, the other aspect taken into account for the purpose is the specific learner attitudes and beliefs, individual societal factors affecting English language acquisition in multilingual settings. Research shows that the most powerful motivator in successful language learning is attitude to the target language and culture (Dikgale, 2019).

The English language is usually prized in multilingual societies as prestigious for getting higher learning, jobs, and mobility in social status (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Such a great favour and appreciation sometimes impress the English language upon its learners and may have a good

impact on the attitude of learners toward it. In the process, care should be taken to ensure that native languages and cultures are not undervalued, as such a practice has the potential to set in negative socio-psychological trends (Ricento, 2021). The one to play the most important role in this process should be one. They need to adopt effective strategies that cater to the unique needs of learners in multilingual settings. That would be through the culturally responsive pedagogy that values and includes learners' native languages and cultures in teaching. Inclusion of the learners' native languages and culture could be looked at as a strategy that can enhance the learners' engagements and outcomes. Translanguaging is the approach that teachers can use in teaching: it implies allowing learners to deploy their full linguistic repertoires as a resource in learning English (García & Li, 2022). The 21st-century digital advancements dawn further availed added resources to students dealing in multilingual settings and the English language. And the digital platforms and resources for language learning are coming out as powerful tools promising personalized learning experiences that can cater to the pace and level of the learner (Warschauer, 2022). The tools are likely to be of great importance to the learners who manage to handle different languages, since they help in greater flexibility and accessibility to a variety of learning materials. The landscape of English language learning in multilingual settings is complex, full of peculiar challenges and promising opportunities. The understanding of these dynamics by educators, policymakers, and researchers, therefore, is a prerequisite for the effective support of English language learners within such settings. This involves understanding the cognitive and culture elements related to multilinguality and effective pedagogical approaches, among them the use of technology to better the learning process. Thus, in such well-informed and holistic practices, the learners in multilingual settings can find their way indeed to flourish in this journey of learning the English language.

Literature Review

Much work has been done in the field of language learning in a multilingual setting. Interdependence Hypothesis was propounded by Cummins (2008), where the skills developed in one language may transfer into another, indicating a possible gain for multilingual learners in the learning of the English language. Therefore, linguistic interference, with its involvement of cognitive load, results in a number of challenges (Odlin, 1989; Paap, 2019). The idea of language learning in multilingual settings is the most repeated one in an attempt to fit it within various sections of educational research, to try and study the special dynamics of multilingual language learning within a number of studies. In this regard, one of the paramount questions in this area pertains to the Interdependence Hypothesis, developed by Cummins (2008). It is based on the assumption that language skills are transferable and can be acquired through the practice of another. On the basis of this hypothesis, prior skills and knowledge both in the first language and in the second may provide a foundation on which new skills are built. This may particularly be of benefit to multilingual learners across their learning of English in that prior experience with other languages can ease the learning of English more proficiently. The natural multilingual ability is posited by Baker & Wright (2017) and thus is bound to bring about raised cognitive flexibility and

metalinguistic awareness further, allowing for better overall language learning ability. Cognitive flexibility is a person's ability to switch between thinking of more than one or many concepts at a time. It is a skill that becomes key in a multilingual environment where there is a necessity to switch between languages depending on the context. The mental agility developed through this process can be beneficial in various facets of life, extending beyond language learning.

Page | 143

Multilingual learners also have an increased level of metalinguistic awareness: the conscious capability to think about and manipulate language's structural features. This is attributed to the fact that multilingual learners understand languages as discretely structured systems that contain different sets of rules and patterns. Such understanding can really form a metalinguistic base that strengthens learning of new languages and also mastering them, for metalinguistic knowledge is used to break the structures and patterns of these languages. However, the road of multilingualism is not paved. As noted by Odlin (1989), the major worry is that of cross-linguistic interference. This is the effect resulting when the competence and performance the learner has developed in his mother tongue (L1) interfere with the comprehension and production of speech in a given second language (L2). For instance, a Spanish-speaking learner of English will use Spanish grammar rules when framing sentences in English. Such kind of interference at the phonetics and vocabulary level may result in either mispronunciations or wrong usage of words. Such a mental block would hamper smooth communication and consequently challenge the process of language learning. Another salient challenge in multilingual environments is that of the cognitive load brought about by managing multiple languages.

The processing and production of several languages simultaneously place very high demands on the cognitive system of the learners (Paap, 2019). This is so because to remember vocabularies, one needs to be aware of grammar, pronunciation, and how to read and write, which all require heavy cognitive input. This incurs cognitive load, and in the end, learning may be retarded; in some instances, this may result in feelings of being overwhelmed in the learners. The challenge is even greater when it comes to multilingual settings, whereby a learner juggles not one language but multiple ones at the same time. Despite that, in consideration of the fact, they are not insurmountable. The right pedagogical strategies and support enable learners to deal effectively with cognitive loads and cross-linguistic interference. This is what explicit language instruction, targeting differences and similarities of the languages, might help learners in anticipating and avoiding potential trouble spots (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). Metalinguistic awareness, coupled with cognitive flexibility, should similarly be a pedagogical strategy for learners to attend to the cognitive demands vis-à-vis multilingualism more effectively. In fact, even though multilingualism does cause all the advantages of being able to have greater cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness, it also causes problems of big depth, for example, cross-linguistic interference and greater cognitive load. With these, we would inform the teaching strategies and mechanisms supporting learners to be equipped to manage complex multilingual situations confidently and more productively. The literature, on the other hand, provides for an ambivalent presentation of language learning within multilingual settings and points toward possible

opportunities and challenges. On the other hand, under the Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins, 2008), cognitive gains accruing from multilingualism (Baker & Wright, 2017) project the possible gains for the English language in multilingual settings. On the one hand, cross-linguistic interference challenges (Odlin, 1989) and cognitive load (Paap, 2019) therefore point at the dire need for pedagogical strategies aimed at giving the learners support in these environments.

Linguistic Relativity and Cognitive Dynamics in Bilingualism

Linguistic relativity, as postulated by Whorf (1956), is a hypothesis that language differences, and particularly in semantic coding, influence cognitive processing far beyond active linguistic activities. From colorful domains such as time (Boroditsky, Fuhrman, & McCormick, 2011; Casasanto & Boroditsky, 2008), color (Athanasopoulos, 2009; Athanasopoulos et al., 2011), to motion Language effects, however, seem to conditionally depend and increase only when the language is rather complex in the case of an explicit way of carrying out the tasks (e.g., Filipovic, 2018; Montero-Melis, Jaeger, & Bylund, 2016).

Sophistication of this discourse lies in the hypothesis of thinking-for-speaking (Slobin, 1996) in which language use is cognitively determined. That actually corresponds with the findings, in which it is found to be strategic in the actual solution to the complex cognitive tasks (Finkbeiner, Nicol, Greth, & Nakamura, 2002). Furthermore, studies that have extended from monolinguals to bilinguals and L2 learners have reported that the conceptual representations in the bilingual mind are dynamic and flexible, pointing to the notion that learning a second language may bring about changes at the level of cognitive restructuring of the categories already obtained (Athanasopoulos et al., 2015; Bylund & Athanasopoulos, 2014). Few studies have reported the existence of a grammatical perspective on motion events in multilingual speakers, with the rare exceptions of Bylund and Athanasopoulos (2014a). Their work informs the way in which multilinguals, with typologically different language systems, conceptualise and structure motion events at the semantic-lexicon interface, focusing on caused motion lexicalisation and conceptualisation of the boundary-crossing type context (Bylund, Athanasopoulos, and Oostendorp, 2013). The cognitive restructuring that undergirds the idea, particularly in the bilingual mind, finds the framework of cognitive grammar, which takes grammatical constructions to act much like rather than form-meaning pairings condition conceptualisation (Langacker, 1987, 1991, 2008). To this extent, it is productive in showing that speakers of different languages will conceptualise the same event in grammatically, pathically, and lexically different ways by virtue of the inherent "affordances" of their languages (Athanasopoulos et al., 2015a; Flecken et al., 2015b).

Some have shown that the linguistic influence of thought is best detected under conditions in which linguistic resources are put into action, or it is the cognitive tasks at stake that do not limit access to linguistic processing (Gennari et al., 2002; Montero-Melis & Bylund, 2017). This interaction of linguistic and cognitive processes highlights that it is a multilevel system, including what must be looked into regarding the modulation of these processes in terms of age of acquisition, language proficiency, and frequency of language use (Lai et al., 2014).

Methodology

The present study has adopted an almost equal intensiveness mixed-methods research approach, wherein the qualitative and quantitative research approaches have been both deployed with equal intensiveness to cover all the aspects of English language learning in multilingual contexts effectively. The study took place within a multilingual educational setting in the Middle East, where 43 English learners—comprising part of the research participants—were exposed on a daily basis to other languages. The method of stratified random sampling guided the strata from which the learners were sampled and was guided further by the representativeness of these samples to the bigger English learner population in the area. Most of the learners from the selected universities in the study can speak other languages fluently, other than English; they ranged between 16 years and 24 years of age.

Page | 145

The students were invited to participate in the survey by answering a questionnaire that intended to investigate their English skills, difficulties, and advantages in the multilingual context as second language learners, together with coping strategies to the issues previously mentioned. Closed questionnaires sought to capture quantitative data, while open ones sought qualitative insight into the experiences and perceptions of the learners. This is exemplified in the provisions below, in Tables 1, 2, and 3. Eight such seasoned English language teachers working in multilingual settings were also interviewed in this research. This is summarised in Table 1. In these two analyses, understanding the differences in teaching methods shown by teachers in multilingual settings, their perceptions of the problems, and benefits related to teaching English in multilingual contexts and their recommendations concerning effective English language teaching enhancement in multilingual settings, where the teachers are qualified and experienced, is justifiable for the use of this purposive sampling technique in this study. Information from Table 4 reveals that the main challenges were linguistic interference and cognitive load. Therefore, most of these challenges were addressed by teachers through cross-linguistic teaching and promotion of metalinguistic awareness, as revealed in Table 5. The mixed-methods approach provided a broader perspective on the learning of English in multilingual environments. This complexity is what the present study intended to unpack: to explore it with merged learners' and teachers' perspectives, quantitative and qualitative data. Such findings, therefore, leave the English language pedagogy to multilingual environments with great insights on exactly how they maximise and cope with both the benefits and challenges that come with this kind of language learning by the practitioners.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Participant Group	Number of Participants	Age Range
English Learners	43	16 - 24
English Teachers	8	N/A

Table 2
Languages Spoken by Learners

Language	Number of Learners
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Arabic	43
French	20
Spanish	10
Other	5

Table 3

Learners' Self-Reported English Proficiency Levels

Proficiency Level	Number of Learners
Beginner	10
Intermediate	20
Advanced	13

Table 4

Perceived Challenges of Learning English in a Multilingual Context (Learners)

Challenge Type	Number of Learners
Linguistic Interference	30
Cognitive Load	28
Motivation	15
Other	5

Table 5

Teaching Strategies Used (Teachers)

Teaching Strategy	Number of Teachers
Cross-linguistic Teaching	8
Metalinguistic Awareness Development	6
Use of L1 in Classroom	5
Other	3

Results

The results section that follows is modelled in order to lay out the results in great detail and exhibit the complex dynamics of English language acquisition in a multilingual setting. The results had emanated from both pieces of information collected in the survey of 43 learners and semi-structured interviews that had been carried out among eight English teachers, as captured in the table below. With regard to learners' demographic profile, all the learners in the study spoke Arabic, with 20 of the learners speaking French fluently, ten speaking Spanish fluently, and five speaking other languages (Table 2). In general, though the learners classified themselves by proficiency into beginner (10), intermediate (20), and advanced (13) (Table 3), no consideration was made for the placement of learners. This is what further enriched the study—this diversity of the spread of proficiency levels, since it made it so that the experiences of learners are probed in advanced and beginner stages of English language learning.

On challenges encountered in the process of learning English in a multilingual context, the most reported challenge was interference by thirty out of the forty-three learners (Table 4). This is within the very definition of linguistic interference—in other words, the trouble in dealing with language structures, phonemes, and vocabulary existing between languages. These findings are consistent with the early literature, which reported that transfer of first language (L1) structures results in errors and misunderstanding much more than it contributes positively to the production of the target language (Odlin, 1989). The second most reported challenge was cognitive load, with 28 participants reporting it as a difficulty. The cognitive load is referred to as the mental effort used in processing incoming information, such as new linguistic rules and vocabulary of the English language. This finding is in line with some of the previous findings that have reported that speaking several languages together might increase cognitive load in learning and possibly slow down learning (Paap, 2019). On the teaching strategies used to manage the challenges, all the eight interviewed teachers reported having used cross-linguistic teaching. Six of them developed metalinguistic awareness, and five of them used the learners' L1 in class. Cross-linguistic teaching involves conscious teaching strategies that effectively make the learners get the idea from conscious comparison between the L1 and L2 structures. The metalinguistic awareness development refers to functions that help the learner become more conscious of language as a system; thus, they develop a learner's ability to think about the manipulation of linguistic forms. However, according to some pieces of research, the use of L1 in the classroom is a debated strategy that supports L2 learning. (Cook, 2001) The qualitative data—sourced from open-ended survey questions and teacher interviews—went into deeper insights surrounding challenges and strategies brought out in the data emanating from the numbers. For example, learners are stressing at times when they have to 'switch their minds' between languages, especially in high-stakes situations like tests. Teachers observed that learners often translated directly from their L1, leading to incorrect English usage. They also shared successful strategies for explicitly teaching differences between English and the learners' L1s, providing encouragement for learners to think about language and how it works, and using the L1 as a scaffolding tool to support the learners' acquisition of English. What this paper underscores is the complex and dynamic character of English learning within multilingual environments. Further identified challenges, including cognitive load and linguistic interference, pinpoint the need for sensitively designed strategies supportive of the multilingual learner. These strategies identified by the teachers can be used as a point of departure for designing pedagogic approach in the classroom practice in this context. Future research could bring forward such strategies to test for effectiveness and even further explore the dimensionality of the multifaceted phenomenon of multilingual language learning.

Discussion

This paper brings to the fore the results of this mixed-methods study in detail: the contexts, interpreting and outlining the implications for English Language Learning in a Multilingual setting. In such a context, the present results underscore the complexity with which individual learner characteristics, their linguistic backgrounds, and the influence of teaching strategies

intertwine in affecting the outcome of language learning. It represents a context within the complexities of how the learners acquire the English language in a multilingual setting, ranging from consideration of such a wide scope of demographics. The demographic diversity shows the necessity of understanding and considering the linguistic backgrounds of English learners. It concentrates on the theoretical possibility that the distance from the first language (L1) to the target language (English) could be the determining factor of pace and success in learning the English language. Studies have shown that the closer the linguistic structures of L1 are to similarity with the target language, the more easing of the language learning might be felt, but if the difference in structures is greater, formidable challenges might be felt (Chiswick & Miller, 2005). Looking at the challenges that learners went through during the learning process, it was revealed that linguistic interference was the most pronounced. This finding is in line with an earlier study that indicated that proficiency by the learners' L1 intrudes into the comprehension and production by the learner in the English language (Odlin, 1989). Another weighty issue raised was the cognitive load, bouncing around with so many languages at the same time. This adds further support to the previous findings related to the cognitive demands of multilingualism (Paap, 2019). It has also been researched that these challenges, especially those of a linguistic nature, are manifested mostly by learners who overgeneralise or erroneously transfer grammar rules from L1 to English. From the above illustrations, it can be understood that cross-linguistic transfer indeed warrants teachers to understand and consider, if possible, students' L1 while teaching. On the other hand, we cannot rule out the possibility of some positive transfer between the languages. It would seem that Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins, 2008, p.127) provides a theoretical underpinning for this view, knowledge and skills acquired in one language can easily transfer into another language. The experiences reported by many of the learners in this study would seem to substantiate the theory that the multilingualism was, in one way or another, burdensome but did also have some compensatory value. This shall be an area of promising future research, because a better and more profound understanding of the dynamics of positive transfer would contribute towards informing teaching strategies that would multiply the benefits of multilingualism for English language learning. Teaching strategies as studied in this study—that is, the teachers using a variety of strategies—pointed at dealing with the obstacles they came along with in a multilingual working environment. However, the most dominant strategy observed was cross-linguistic teaching, followed by the development of metalinguistic awareness and judicious use of L1 in a classroom setting. To some degree, the reviewed literature supports such strategies, which it says may, in fact, reduce the difficulty of multilingual language learning, such as conscious comparison between the languages and clarifications of the learners' awareness of language as a system (Cook, 2001). The use of L1 is generally controversial; however, it has been found effective when used as a scaffolding tool to help in English language learning. This underpins just how complex the issue of learning English within multilingual contexts is. In the meantime, the greatest liabilities of linguistic interference and cognitive load can be remedied through cross-linguistic teaching, development of metalinguistic awareness, and taking wise steps regarding the use of the L1 in the classroom. Additionally, the potential benefits of multilingualism, such as positive transfer, look

promising for future research and practice. It is my hope that this study might be able to contribute toward shedding light on English language learning in multilingual settings in a more informed and focused manner; this may, in turn, inform improved, inclusive pedagogical approaches.

Expanding further, the results provide key insights into motivation, a crucial factor in language learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). A noteworthy number of learners reported struggles with motivation, an aspect that warrants greater consideration given its significant role in successful language acquisition. Further examination of the data indicated a link between the unique challenges posed by multilingual contexts and the dip in learners' motivation. This link might be attributed to the increased cognitive load and linguistic interference issues, making learning English seem daunting, thereby affecting learners' motivation. Thus, teachers should design creative ways that may boost learners' motivation, such as the integration of elements from learners' culture in teaching and learning activities, in addition to linking learning activities to learners' interests and real-life situations in which learning can be applied. The data singled out the use of metacognitive strategies by learners. The learners reported using a broad range of strategies to manage their language learning process. These strategies included self-monitoring, awareness, and planning activities for language learning, and the look for an opportunity to practice language outside the classroom. This is a positive result since metacognitive strategies do have an impact on the successful outcome of language learning and learner independence (Vandergrift, 2005). The development of these strategies within multilingual environments by learners may suggest the development of important skills for the self-regulatory process of learning. This is another area where teachers can carry on guiding their learners. Pedagogical implications of how to teach English in multilingual contexts emerge from teacher interviews concerning such teaching strategies for the development of metalinguistic awareness. Of these, cross-linguistic teaching methods and metalinguistic awareness raising find space in the interviews. Others reverberate in the literature (Butzkamm, 2003; Jessner, 2008).

Page | 149

The teachers' perspectives on the use of the L1 as a teaching tool were particularly interesting. While there is ongoing debate about the place of the L1 in the English language classroom, this study suggests that teachers view the strategic use of the L1 as a valuable tool in multilingual settings. The recognition of the L1 as a cognitive tool aligns with the theoretical perspective of Cummins (2007), which views the L1 as a resource that can support the learning of subsequent languages. Additionally, the teachers emphasised the importance of building intercultural competence in the classroom, a skill that goes beyond linguistic proficiency and encompasses knowledge and attitudes towards different cultures (Byram, 2009). This suggests that English language instruction in multilingual settings could have the added benefit of fostering intercultural competence, enhancing learners' ability to function in diverse cultural settings, a highly valued skill in today's globalised world.

This basically has relevance for the English language learning in the multilingual context from a different vantage point. Such an insight is important for the facilitation of teachers and educators in being able to adapt and develop their pedagogical approaches to the needs of the learners in

such settings. In addition, the current findings also underline the importance of developing further strategies that can capitalise even more on the benefits and/or challenges of multilingualism. While valuable, those researchers' contributions will inevitably be more holistic as more complete work is done in other multilingual settings, most likely with more range in age and proficiency level.

Implications and Recommendations

Page | 150

The implications that would be realised from such an investigation remain very essential in the English language teaching multilingual environment. First, consistent with the pervasiveness of linguistic interference, educators must be aware of potential areas of difficulty for the learners based on native languages. This would include learning the structure of language and the features of learners' first language, which are in contrast with English. Language teaching may make these problematic areas sensitive so that the learner anticipates and avoids the occurrence of errors. Similarly, Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008) notice this as a source of cross-linguistic interference that should be foregrounded and fixed.

Secondly, the cognitive load problem speaks to the needs of teaching strategies that help learners to handle the strain of multilingualism. This is possible through scaffolding strategies, where the learners are given the new languages progressively, in a structured way, and supportively. Thus, cognitive flexibility is one component of global competency that includes open-mindedness and an ongoing re-evaluation of knowledge. Some of the tasks on language switching may come in handy with techniques that promote cognitive flexibility. Further, educators can bring in strategies that will ensure the learners are well able to organise and retrieve language knowledge in ways that will minimise the cognitive load.

The findings in this research of the benefits of multilingualism, therefore, also present potential areas for English Language Pedagogy. For instance, the finding that transfers often take place among languages could give an implication that educators can actually work to encourage and facilitate this transfer explicitly. It may include activities that engage English learners in relating English to their first language by using previously possessed language skills to assist in learning English.

Another implication is that motivation, along with salience-driven factors, comes from the understanding of culture. That would mean a contribution to English Language Teaching in a multilingual setting from cultural learning. It is thus that educators may relate the learning of the language to, let us say, the culture of the following country, and be able to tap intrinsic motivation, hence learning the language more vividly and meaningfully. This research shall be illuminating in providing a more nuanced understanding of the English language learning that happens within multilingual settings, and, therefore, it will really be very useful for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. Identifying and hence taking the challenges of multilingual learners in such a manner that we exploit these benefits of multilingualism will allow language learning to be more effective and inclusive.

Conclusion

This research brings to light complexities attached to English language learning in settings that are multilingual, characterised by the interplay of learner characteristics, linguistic backgrounds, and teaching strategies. Linguistic interference and cognitive load are but some of the major difficulties faced; however, these are offset through cross-linguistic teaching, raising metalinguistic awareness, and judicious use of the native language. Here is the interesting point—an eventual advantage that the possibility of positive language transfer may constitute, reiterating the multilingualism dialogues. Of course, motivational factors stand out as factors affecting language learning and will demand culturally relevant, engaging approaches. And the use of metacognitive strategies by learners represents one of the most promising areas in the development of learner autonomy and their language learning outcome.

Page | 151

This set of findings uniquely contributes to the explanation of English language learning within a multilingual setting and is of critical importance to teachers and educators in their practice and future research. This further reflects the importance of not only tailored teaching but also the importance of learning strategies that fully take into consideration the disadvantages and advantages of multilingualism. The current study provided the first stepping stone upon which future research can build as it investigates strategies that further capture the benefits of multilingualism and at the same time deal with the associated difficulties. Further research is warranted in different multilingual settings, on age groups, and levels of proficiency, since there are more factors for the dynamics of language learning. This will contribute to developing a better understanding of the learning of the English language in multilingual environments. This will enable the development of much more targeted pedagogical approaches.

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