

Challenges in Bilingual Teaching among Teachers of Teacher Education Institutions of Punjab

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Abstract

The teacher, the most vital element who can maximise learning outcomes of students, gets overlooked. Teachers hold a key position in any educational reconstruction programme. Various research, education commissions and policies have elaborated the effectiveness of learner-centered instruction, especially mother tongue-based education. It is also recommended to adopt bilingual approach in teaching learning process. But only limited empirical research has looked deeply at challenges faced by teachers especially in bilingual classrooms. Therefore, it is quite important to know whether content teachers are adequately prepared to address the rising number of bilingual students in their classrooms. To find out the challenges in bilingual teaching among teachers of teacher education institutions, researchers constructed an online five-point rating scale with 26 positive and negative items related to challenges in bilingual teaching. The sample consisted of 28 male and female teachers of different teacher education institutions of Punjab. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the basic features of the data and to provide simple summaries about the sample. After analysing the received data, it was found that most participants agreed that they get very little support from the administration regarding bilingual teaching; half the participants admitted that they have difficulty with technical terms and academic vocabulary in two languages during the lecture; most participants felt the lack of quality learning resources like books in both languages; and more than half the teachers admit that they face difficulties in using ICT while preparing lesson plans and providing instruction in a language other than English (as ICT generally supports only English language). It is recommended that there should be pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes that can sensitise the teachers to deal with bilingual situations in an academic environment. Such training programmes must equip teachers with strategies that can be used to tackle the bilingual or multilingual classroom situations. Also, developing, applying, and sustaining a bilingual educational programme demands leaders who are attentive about bilingualism, bilingual education, bilingual teaching, and emergent bilingual student population. Moreover, there is need to encourage the publishers to produce authentic study materials in different language for immediate use. In addition to this, research in the field of bilingual or multilingual education must be supported and promoted so that various solutions can be drawn to deal with challenges concerned with bilingual teaching.

Keywords: Teacher education, Bilingual teaching, Challenges

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Introduction

Multilingual ambience is an essential feature of Indian diversity. Indian linguistic diversity is marked not only by the number of languages spoken but also by the way these languages are exhibited in writing, speaking, cultural symbols, political, ethnic, and social markers. India has witnessed the multilingualism due to the arrival or invasion by several ethnic, religious, or political groups and races since ancient times. The invasions led to the migration of people from one society to another. As a result, people exchanged their culture, script, and language.

In many cases, a language attains enormous power due to the cultural aspiration of people, spoken by the elite class or the ability of language to contain within itself the identity, attitudes, and culture. Also, some socio-political factors give tremendous power to a language and make it more prestigious than other languages. Thus, a demand for a language drives national and state policy, like today, English is considered as the language of power in the whole world. It is seen as the gateway of opportunity across the world. In addition to this, the world itself is now entering into the phase of globalisation where the phenomenon of multilingualism has become the norm to meet the global needs. Parents also prefer to educate their children in the language of power. Similarly, at state levels various languages are spoken, but due to cultural reasons, people's aspirations or the standard form of languages, the selected language wins the place as the medium of instruction in schools. Also, the multilingual, multiethnic, and multicultural character of Indian society demanded the inclusion of several languages in the school curriculum, and at the university level. Moreover, various educationalists, education commissions stressed on imparting education in the mother tongue. Due to this, the Indian education system is moving towards addressing or promoting multilingualism or bilingualism in classrooms.

Bilingual education, in simple terms means teaching the academic content in any two languages. The basic aim of this bilingual education programme is to help the learners to learn in their preferred languages and empower them to master the curriculum. This is done through explicit instructions in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in the target language in all the academic areas. Bilingual education implies the use of two languages as the medium of instruction for a child in part or all the school curricula (Cohen 1975).

The concept of bilingual education in India cannot be discussed without discussing the national sociolinguistics scene.

From the educational point of view, India has the following typology of language:

1. Regional languages
2. Classical languages
3. Mother tongues other than regional languages
4. English as a foreign language
5. Hindi as a national language

The three-language policy suggested by Kothari Commission has currently been implemented to accommodate the above-mentioned languages. As the mission suggested, from Class 1 to 10, regional language or mother tongue is taught as mandatory language. From Class 5 to 10, Hindi or English is taught as a compulsory second language. If either Hindi or English was not taught in the previous years, then either or one is taught as a third mandatory language from Class 8 to 10.

Bilingual education in the Indian context

As discussed above, bilingual education, especially in India is generally termed as the instruction through regional language and English. The demand for English as a medium of instruction in India is increasing day by day. A majority of Indian parents want to provide English medium education as it is considered a more privileged head start in

life (Boruah 2015). Also, lack of instructional material and lack of modernisation of Indian languages contributes to the increasing demand for English. The options provided for students to attain education in a regional or local language is also well intended. The education in regional language helps students from rural areas where their previous instruction was in a regional or local language. Higher education institutions also allow students to adopt the mother tongue or regional language as a medium of instruction to help students grasp the concept better.

Need of bilingual education in India

India has been a multilingual country from the Vedic period to the current scenario. Multilingualism is a product of arrival or invasion by several ethnic, religious, or political groups and races since ancient times, migration of people from one society to another, and a reflection of its diverse cultures on different societies. The multitude of languages came into being when millions of men and women with their children from different states moved to another state to earn their daily lives. Therefore, such movement of people gave birth to language diversity. Moreover, the Indian Constitution in the 8th schedule recognised 22 Indian languages. Also, there is a demand for the inclusion of 38 more languages to the 8th schedule of Constitution.

In many cases, a language attains enormous power due to the cultural aspiration of people, spoken by the elite class or the ability of a language to contain within itself the identity, attitudes, and culture. Also, some socio-political factors give tremendous power to a language and make it more prestigious than other languages. Thus, a demand for a language drives national and state policy. As today, English is considered as the language of power in the whole world. It is seen as the gateway of opportunity across the world. In addition to this, the world itself is now entering into the phase

of globalization where the phenomenon of multilingualism has become the norm to meet the global needs. Parents also prefer to educate their offspring in language of power. Similarly, at state levels various languages are spoken, but due to cultural reasons, people aspirations or standard form of languages, selected language wins the place in medium of instruction in schools. Poor grasp of English adds to the demand of regional and local language as a medium of instruction. Therefore, the education system has to offer feasible options to choose the medium of instruction according to the demand of language and diversity among learners.

Review of Related Literature

Ali, Motbaynor & Mulat (2019) in their study assessed the problems and possibilities of multilingual classrooms in North and East Shoa zones of Ethiopia. Simple random sampling techniques were employed to select 260 primary schoolteachers and directors. Majority of respondents were familiar with the concept of multilingual classrooms. It was found that most teachers did not know languages other than their own mother tongue. There was no such special consideration and support for those students who could not speak the medium of instruction, which may have resulted from a teacher's inability to speak another language other than the medium of instruction. So, 36 per cent of respondents disagreed that they could easily communicate with all the students in the classroom, even though the students were multilingual.

Petron, Ates & Berg (2019) in their study on the topic, 'You Just Sit There and Be Quiet: Latino/A Bilingual Educators in Texas' explored how bilingual Latino teachers construct and narrate professional lives as a bilingual educator while dealing with the power relations that exist within the school. Three main themes emerged from the findings. The first theme denoted challenges to provide instruction due to lack

of resources. The second theme pointed to the isolation and marginalisation of educators as well students from the mainstream. The third theme dealt with the education practice that makes them a failure.

Mudenda & Nankamba (2017) studied the challenges of using the local language as a medium of instruction in a multilingual setting. The data was collected from purposively selected 50 teachers of Class 1 to 4 using semi-structured questionnaires. Of them, 72 per cent teachers were found not prepared to teach using local languages.

Manjusha (2016), in the study, investigated the problems of education in multi-religious and multilingual poverty-stricken slum areas of Calcutta. The stratified random sampling was employed to collect data. The sample included 400 school going children, 300 housewives and 575 working class people from three slum areas of Calcutta. The inquiry form of the questionnaire was used as a tool to collect data. The study revealed that a different linguistic background of children adds to their educational problems.

Raosahab (2016) in his study investigated the different aspects of bilingualism and its impact on English teaching and learning at the undergraduate level. The researcher randomly selected 20 colleges of Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University Nanded. He found that 80 per cent of the teachers perceived the difference in English language competence of students from rural and urban areas. Moreover, a majority of the teachers opined that students are not comfortable with English language.

Rasheed, Zeeshan & Zaidi (2017) carried out a study to find out the challenges faced by female secondary school teachers in teaching English in a multilingual classroom. The purposive sampling was employed to select the participants. The data was collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. They found that English was the learner's third language. Most students belonged to different linguistic background, so they did not have exposure to the English language. This increased anxiety

in them and made them passive listeners.

Gul and Aziz (2015) examined the English-speaking competencies of 350 schoolteachers. The study also explored the causes of weak language competencies of teachers. Structured interviews were conducted to collect the data. The teachers were found confident to speak in English, while their fluency and pronunciation was average and they were weak in vocabulary and grammar. Overall speaking competency of the teachers was below average.

Farooque (2015) conducted a study on English language competence of teachers and students' achievement in English medium primary schools of Kannur district. The study aimed to measure the English language competence of teachers and the achievement of students of Class 4 in English, Mathematics and EVS. The sample consisted of 833 students and 108 teachers. It was found that there was no significant difference between mean score of male and female teachers in English language proficiency in comprehension. Female teachers had better English language communication ability than male teachers.

Rajkhowa (2012) in his study titled 'A study on the methods of teaching English for developing teaching competence of the secondary school teachers of Assam' studied the professional and academic qualifications of secondary level English teachers. He found that most of the teachers used marking as a way to provide feedback to students. Also, majority of teachers use bilingual methods to teach English in teacher education institutions.

Rationale of the study

The latest National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, in its recommendation states that the medium of instruction up to Class 5, and preferably till Class 8 and beyond, should be home language/mother tongue/local language. Therefore, the education system has to offer feasible options to choose the medium of instruction according to the

diversity among learners and demand of language they know best. The multilingual and multicultural character of Indian societies demanded the inclusion of several languages in the school curriculum. Due to this, several states are moving towards addressing or promoting multilingualism in classrooms. Similarly, Punjab School Education Board introduced English as an 'optional' medium of instruction from 1 April 2018 in primary, middle and secondary schools with the objective of meeting the public demand, improving the quality of education, bridging the gap with private schools and increasing the enrollment of children in government schools. Earlier, Punjabi was the primary medium of instruction, followed by Hindi medium. Private schools in the states are also offering three mediums of instruction mainly Punjabi, Hindi, and English, while Punjabi and English are being offered as a medium of instruction in state public schools.

In addition to this, in higher education institutions also, including teacher education institutes, students can choose any one language as the medium of instruction out of three options – Punjabi, English, and Hindi. Quite often the most vital element, the teacher, who can maximise learning outcomes of the students, gets overlooked. Teachers hold a key position in any educational reconstruction programme. Various researches have elaborated the effectiveness of learner-centered instruction and student teacher relationship-building practices in educational settings. Only limited empirical researches have looked deeply at challenges faced by teachers especially in bilingual classrooms. Therefore, it is important to know whether content teachers are adequately prepared to address the rising number of bilingual students in their classrooms. Therefore, the present study will advance the current literature by

exploring the challenges faced by teachers in bilingual classrooms.

After studying the related literature and reviews, the researcher has found a huge gap in the studies related to challenges in bilingual teaching. Hence, the study titled 'Challenges in Bilingual Teaching among Teachers of Teacher Education Institutions' was selected by the researcher.

Methodology

Objective: The researcher has framed the following objective for the present study.

To study the challenges in bilingual teaching among male and female teachers of teacher education institutions

Research design: For the present study, an online survey was conducted by the researchers in Punjab.

Population: The population of the present study was all teachers of teacher education institutions in Punjab.

Sample: The sample consisted of 28 male and female teachers of different teacher education institutions of Punjab.

Tool: To find out the challenges in bilingual teaching among teachers of teacher education institutions, the researcher has constructed an online five-point rating scale, which has 26 positive and negative items related to the challenges in bilingual teaching.

Data analysis, interpretation and discussion

A descriptive analysis was used to describe the basic features of the data and to provide simple summaries about the sample. Data was interval in nature and was reported in mean score. Of the teachers, 28 completed the 26 quantitative items in the survey as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Item no.	Statement	N (Total no. of teachers responded)	Mean score
	I feel comfortable while teaching in bilingual classrooms	28	4.03
	I can efficiently implement appropriate lessons in my bilingual classes	28	3.67
	I find that time of class is too little to teach in two languages	28	3.7
	There are inadequacies of instructional materials in both languages to address the academic needs of a student	28	2.89
	I feel lack of language competency in both languages	28	3.21
	I find lack of administrative support for bilingual teaching	28	2.14
	Dealing with the students of two mediums does not disturb the classroom environment	28	3.14
	Preparing question papers in two languages puts extra burden on teachers	28	2.82
	I find equal participation of students of both medium in teaching learning process	28	3.45
	I was informed about the bilingual nature of classrooms at the time of recruitment	28	3.50
	I have received sufficient pre-service training for bilingual education programmes	28	3.25
	I find it difficult to code-switch between languages while delivering instruction	28	3.07
	I could find enough time during the day to plan lessons in two languages	28	3.07
	Bilingual teaching puts extra burden on teachers that directly impacts the working conditions	28	2.75
	I find difficulty with technical terms and academic vocabulary in two languages during the lecture	28	2.82
	I get enough support from my senior for bilingual teaching	28	3.25
	I have received in-service training for bilingual teaching	28	3.03
	During the recruitment process, I was asked to demonstrate the proficiency in both languages for bilingual classrooms	28	3.03
	Students of two mediums in the same class do not cause discipline problems	28	3.42
	I can provide equal attention to students of both medium in a bilingual classroom	28	3.78
	The lengthy curriculum is a big challenge in a bilingual classroom	28	2.71
	Bilingual classroom negatively affects the academic performance of students	28	3.50

	Extra duties in addition to my instructional roles constrain my effectiveness in bilingual teaching	28	2.96
	There is lack of quality learning resources like books in both languages	28	2.26
	I find enough time during class to address the individual academic needs of students of both mediums	28	3.53
	I find difficulty in using ICT while preparing lesson plans and providing instruction in a language other than English	28	2.59

Interpretation and discussion

1. *I feel comfortable while teaching in bilingual classrooms*

Mean score: 4.03. It means that most participants agree that they feel comfortable while teaching in bilingual classrooms.

2. *I can efficiently implement appropriate lessons in my bilingual classes*

Mean score: 3.67. It means that a majority of the participants agree that they can efficiently implement the appropriate lessons in both languages in bilingual classes.

3. *I find that time of class is too little to teach in two languages*

Mean score: 3.7. It means that a majority of participants disagree that the time of class is too little to teach in two languages.

4. *There are inadequacies of instructional materials in both languages to address the academic needs of a student*

Mean score: 2.89. It means that a majority of the participants are neutral about this statement.

5. *I feel lack of language competency in both languages*

Mean score: 3.21. It means that a majority of participants are neutral about this statement.

6. *I find lack of administrative support for bilingual teaching*

Mean score: 2.14. It means that most of the participants agree that they get very little support from the administration regarding bilingual teaching.

7. *Dealing with the students of two mediums does not disturb the classroom*

environment

Mean score: 3.14. It means that a majority of participants agree that dealing with students of two mediums does not disturb the classroom environment.

8. *Preparing question papers in two languages puts extra burden on the teachers*

Mean score: 2.82. It means that a majority of participants are neutral that preparing question papers in two languages puts extra burden on the teachers.

9. *I find equal participation of students of both medium in teaching learning process*

Mean score: 3.45. It means that a majority of participants agree with the view that they find equal participation of students of both medium in teaching learning process.

10. *I was informed about the bilingual nature of classrooms at the time of recruitment*

Mean score: 3.50. It means that a majority of participants agree that they were informed about the bilingual nature of classrooms at the time of recruitment.

11. *I have received sufficient pre-service training for bilingual education programmes*

Mean score: 3.25. It means that a majority of participants have a neutral view that they have received sufficient pre-service training to deal with bilingual classrooms.

12. *I find it difficult to code-switch between languages while delivering instruction*

Mean score: 3.07. It means that a majority of participants have a neutral view regarding this statement.

13. *could find enough time during the day to plan lessons in two languages*
Mean score: 3.07. It means that a majority of participants agree that they can find enough time during the day to plan lessons in two languages.
14. *Bilingual teaching puts extra burden on teachers that directly impacts the working conditions*
Mean score: 2.75. It means that a majority of participants are neutral regarding this statement.
15. *I find difficulty with technical terms and academic vocabulary in two languages during the lecture*
Mean score: 2.82. It means that more than half the participants find it difficult to deal with technical terms and academic vocabulary in two languages while teaching in bilingual classrooms.
16. *I get enough support from my senior for bilingual teaching*
Mean score: 3.25. It means that a majority of participants are neutral about the statement.
17. *I have received in-service training for bilingual teaching*
Mean score: 3.03. It means that a majority of participants are neutral about the statement.
18. *During the recruitment process, I was asked to demonstrate the proficiency in both languages for bilingual classrooms*
Mean score: 3.03. It means that a majority of participants are neutral about the statement.
19. *Students of two mediums in the same class do not cause discipline problems*
Mean score: 3.42. It means that a majority of participants agree with the statement.
20. *I can provide equal attention to students of both mediums in a bilingual classroom*
Mean score: 3.78. It means that a majority of the participants agree with the statement.
21. *The lengthy curriculum is a big challenge in a bilingual classroom.*
Mean score: 2.71. It means that a majority of participants are neutral about this statement.
22. *Bilingual classroom negatively affects the academic performance of students*
Mean score: 3.50. It means that a majority of participants disagree with the statement *Extra duties in addition to my instructional roles constrain my effectiveness in bilingual teaching.*
23. *Mean score: 2.96. It means that a majority of participants are neutral with this statement.*
There is lack of quality learning resources like books in both languages.
24. *Mean score: 2.26. It means that a majority of participants agree that there is lack of quality learning resources like books in both languages.*
I find enough time during class to address the individual academic needs of students of both mediums
Mean score: 3.53. It means that a majority of participants agree that they find enough time during class to address the individual academic needs of students of both medium.
25. *I find difficulty in using ICT while preparing lesson plans and providing instruction in a language other than English (as ICT generally supports only English language)*
Mean score: 2.59. It means that a majority of participants agree with this statement.

Major findings

This study is aimed at analysing at which point a teacher faces challenges while teaching the students of two mediums. The findings revealed that a majority of teachers can effectively implement their lessons in two languages in a bilingual classroom. Of the respondents, 75 per cent registered their support that they can effectively teach in bilingual classrooms. However, most of the participants agreed that they get very little support from the administration regarding bilingual teaching. In addition to this, 46.4 per cent of the respondents felt difficulty while using technical terms and academic

vocabulary in bilingual classroom. Moreover, 46.6 per cent of the respondents with a mean score of 2.26 said there is lack of quality learning resources including books in two mediums. Also, most female respondents found it difficult to use ICT while preparing lesson plans and providing instruction in a language other than English.

Recommendations, educational implications and conclusion

The study reveals that many of the teachers admitted that they have not received training for bilingual teaching. Therefore, it is recommended that there should be pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes to sensitise teachers to deal with the bilingual situations in an academic environment. Such type of training programmes must equip teachers with the strategies that can be used to tackle the bilingual or multilingual classroom situations.

Also, most participants felt the lack of administrative support in the context of bilingual teaching. It can be easily measured by the resources allocated by them in support of bilingual programmes. Therefore, the educational leaders must make special efforts and invest the necessary resources to get language resources concerning the academic purpose both for students and teachers. Also, there is a strong need for well-prepared leaders in teacher education institutions who can support and oversee teachers. Therefore, developing, applying, and sustaining a bilingual educational

programme requires leaders who are attentive about bilingualism, bilingual education, bilingual teaching and emergent bilingual student population (Menken 2017). Additionally, a majority of bilingual teachers are doing unpaid overtime and invisible work before and after the class to find, create and translate study materials. Their burden is exacerbated by the lack of ready-made study materials in their language of instruction. This problem can only be sorted out by encouraging the publishers to produce authentic study materials in different languages for immediate use.

In addition to this, the biggest barrier in bilingual teaching is lack of teachers with the requisite knowledge and pedagogical skills. Thus, there is a strong need to redesign the training programmes and to develop short term in-service training programmes or bridge courses for bilingual teaching that should not remain confined to the lecture method with little scope but offer opportunity for trainees to vigorously take part in the training process. The recruitment rules for teachers also need to be reviewed keeping in mind the demand of bilingual competency in existing scenario.

Moreover, research in the field of bilingual or multilingual education must be supported and promoted so that various solutions can be drawn to deal with challenges concerned with it. This research can be helpful to educational planners, teachers, teaching material providers, publishers, and administrators.

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