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The Effects of Bilingualism on Cognitive Development: Cognitive Benefits and Challenges of Bilingualism in Children and Adults in Pakistan

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Bilingualism, Cognitive Development, Cognitive Benefits, Memory, Attention, Problem-Solving, Pakistan, Language Interference, Identity Conflicts. **Corresponding Author:** **Dr. Gul Zamin Khan,** Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Malakand, KP Email: gulzaminkhanuom@gmail.com	This paper will discuss the benefits of bilingualism and problems of bilingualism among children and adults in Pakistan, a country characterized by a multilingual setting. This paper, through a quantitative research, looks at how the bilinguals can use more than two languages in their daily lives and how bilingualism influences the cognitive mechanism of recollection, attention, and problem solving and multitasking. The sample on the surveyed population was 200 (children (8-15), adults (18-45)). The results reveal that there is a strong positive relationship between bilingualism and cognitive flexibility. This paper has finally made a conclusion that bilingualism has significant positive cognitive benefits but also has problems that must be addressed in the education setting.

1. Introduction
Background
Bilingualism which is the capability to speak two or more languages has become a topic of growing concern in the field of cognitive science. It has been found that bilingualism may have some cognitive advantages, including cognitive flexibility, attention control, and greater memory performance. Bilingualism is a common phenomenon in a multilingual nation like Pakistan that is seen to have numerous languages, including Urdu, English, Punjabi, Pashto, and Sindhi. However, with the high population of bilinguals in the country, there is limited research on the discussion of the particular cognitive results of bilingualism in the Pakistani setting. Pakistani languages have varied social, cultural and political implications that could have certain impacts on the cognitive development. This research seeks to address this gap by

studying the impact of bilingualism on cognitive development especially on children and adults in Pakistan.

In South Asia, bilingualism is not only a norm, rather, it is even anticipated. In Pakistan, people usually use several languages, both the national languages (e.g., Urdu, English) and regional languages (e.g. Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi). Nevertheless, the studies on bilingualism and cognitive development have largely focused their attention in the Western settings and have not recognized the social and cultural aspects which are unique to bilingualism in South Asia (Rahman, 2002). In Pakistan, bilinguals tend to negotiate the social world of language prestige where English is generally regarded as language of upward mobility and regional language may have local identity and less prestige at formal arena (Bourdieu, 1991).

Although bilingualism has advantages in terms of cognitive abilities, it has its challenges as well. Among the most frequent of them is the language interference, when the components of one language interfere with the fluency of another language. This may lead to the speech and understanding problems (MacLeod et al., 2010). Besides, the bilingual people in multilingual communities tend to experience a conflict in identity because speaking specific languages can indicate various social statuses, and this can be psychologically stressful (Rampton, 1995). As an illustration, bilinguals can experience the necessity to speak English in the workplace to preserve a modern image, and speaking local languages can be seen as less significant.

Research Problem

Cognitive benefits are commonly attributed to bilingualism but the particular effects of bilingualism on cognitive development remain to be comprehended in the context of multilingual South Asia (including Pakistan). Although various studies have established the cognitive advantages of bilinguals such as the ability to concentrate more and remember events better, it is not yet known how these advantages manifest in the realities of a country such as Pakistan where the bilingualism scenario is informed by factors such as the prestige of the languages and the socio-economic status and the school system. The current study explores cognitive implications of bilingualism in both children and adults in Pakistan with regard to complications inspired by linguistic and cultural diversity of the compounded use of different languages in a multicultural society.

Research Questions

What is the effect of bilingualism on cognitive development of children and adults in Pakistan?

What are the cognitive benefits of bilinguals in memory, attention and problem-solving?

What are the cognitive processing difficulties with language interference and cognitive load of bilingual people?

What are the perceptions of bilinguals on the influence of language practices on cognitive activities and normal functioning?

Significance of the Study

This piece of work is relevant in a number of ways. One, it adds to the knowledge of bilingualism and cognitive development in the South Asian region that has received insufficient research compared to the West. Second, it offers the understanding of how the process of bilingualism in Pakistan affects the cognitive processes including attention, memory, and problem-solving, which are essential both in academic and daily functioning. Third, the implications of the study on the Pakistani education policy in general, and bilingual education organization, in particular, are practical. Lastly, because of the emphasis on both advantages and difficulties, this paper will give a comprehensive look into the role of bilingualism towards cognitive development.

Literature Review
Bilinguals and Cognitive Development

There are numerous cognitive advantages that have been associated with bilingualism. Research shows that bilinguals are more likely to perform better than the monolingual in matters that involve some form of cognitive control i.e. changing of tasks and solving problems (Bialystok, 2009). The cognitive benefits associated with being a bilingual person are explained by the ability to perform better in the executive functioning, working memory, and attention control (Kroll et al., 2012). The benefits take place due to the fact that bilinguals are required to continuously alternate between languages and this act enhances the flexibility of their cognitive ability and their general brain activity.

Cognitive Advantages of being a Bilingual

The cognitive benefits associated with bilingualism are:

Greater Executive Control: Bilinguals tend to have better performance in tasks involving mental flexibility e.g. task switching or multi-tasking (Bialystok, 2009).

Improved memory: Bilingual people usually have an advantage in memory tasks, and especially those where they have to remember unrelated things (Kroll, 2012).

Enhanced Attention: Bilinguals have a distorted attention control and therefore can pay more attention in the distracting or complicated environment (Costa et al., 2008).

These benefits have been shown in different settings, in children as well as in old adults, which implies that bilingualism has cognitive benefits across the lifespan.

Research Gap

Although a lot has been studied concerning the influence of bilingualism on cognition in the west, there is no specific study on bilingualism in South Asia. In particular, the research of the impact of bilingualism on cognitive development has not been conducted on a large scale in Pakistan where people use a large variety of languages, and the level of social importance of the language varies. Additionally, the fact that bilingual people have to struggle with language interference and identity conflicts are also not thoroughly studied in the Pakistani context. This paper solves these gaps by explaining the advantages and disadvantages of bilingualism in Pakistan, particularly in terms of the cognitive advantages.

Methodology

Research Design

The proposed study is quantitative in nature and uses quantitative methods of data collection to study the cognitive impacts of bilingualism in Pakistan. It deals with the measurement of the cognitive performance based on the structured surveys and cognitive activities.

Data Collection

200 participants (children, ages 8-15; adults, ages 18-45) who are living in the urban areas of Pakistan participated in the structured survey. The questionnaire evaluated the language level of the participants, the frequency of language use and the cognitive skills (e.g. memory, problem-solving and attention tasks).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundations of this study are based on two major theoretical frameworks:

Cognitive Development Theory (Piaget, 1973) on which the basis of analysis on the impact of bilingualism on cognitive ability including memory, problem-solving, and cognitive flexibility is founded.

Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) that focuses on the importance of social interaction in cognitive development and offers an opportunity to analyse how bilinguals perform their tasks in social situations using their languages.

Data Analysis and Findings

The SPSS software was used to analyze the survey data. The connections between bilingualism and cognitive abilities (memory, attention, problem-solving) were investigated with the help of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and ANOVA tests.

Table 1: Cognitive Performance by Language Proficiency

Language Proficiency	Memory Task Score	Attention Task Score	Problem-Solving Score
Monolingual (Urdu)	72.3	65.5	67.8
Bilingual (Urdu/English)	85.6	80.9	83.4
Bilingual (Urdu/Regional)	78.2	74.3	75.1

This table is used to compare the performance of cognitive tasks in children and adults of various levels of language proficiency. The findings show that the bilingual participants (Urdu/English) have higher performance in all the cognitive tasks such as memory, attention and problem-solving as compared to both the monolingual Urdu speakers and the regional language speakers. Bilingual children and adults, who possess the competence in both Urdu and English, demonstrate very high scores in all the tasks of cognitive character than the monolinguals. There are also the middle scores of bilinguals whose regional language abilities are also bilingual, which provides the cognitive benefits of a second language, especially when using English as the most common language both in school and in employment.

–Table 2: Cognitive Performance across Age Groups and Language Proficiency

This table provides a comparison of cognitive performance (memory, attention, problem-solving) across different age groups (children and adults), considering their bilingual proficiency (Urdu and English, regional languages).

Age Group	Language Proficiency	Memory Task Score	Attention Task Score	Problem-Solving Score
Children (8-15)	Monolingual (Urdu)	70.2	63.1	64.5
	Bilingual (Urdu/English)	84.5	79.3	82.0
	Bilingual (Urdu/Regional)	76.1	71.4	73.8
Adults (18-45)	Monolingual (Urdu)	74.1	68.2	69.5
	Bilingual (Urdu/English)	87.3	82.1	85.0
	Bilingual (Urdu/Regional)	79.6	75.5	77.3

This table indicates a definite tendency of cognitive work depending on age and linguistic proficiency. Bilingual (Urdu/English) children, as well as adults, are much more successful in memory, attention, and solving problems and are better qualified to address the tasks in comparison to their monolingual colleagues. Bilingual individuals have the greatest cognitive advantages in the adult age group, particularly in activities with complex cognitive control. Although the bilingual children perform better in all tasks than their monolingual counterparts, the difference is not as large as that among adults, which is attributable to the cumulative benefits of bilingual education with respect to the cognitive benefits. The results indicate that the influence of bilingualism on the cognitive functions improves with age and exposure.

Table 3: Frequency of Language Use across Contexts by Age Group

This table provides the frequency of language use across different social contexts (family, university, work, social media) for children and adults in urban Pakistan.

Context	Age Group	English (%)	Urdu (%)	Regional Language (%)	Code-Switching (%)
Family	Children (8-15)	15.2	62.3	20.1	2.4
	Adults (18-45)	19.5	56.1	22.7	1.7
University/Work	Children (8-15)	35.2	47.6	9.2	8.0
	Adults (18-45)	68.9	24.3	3.2	3.6
Social Media	Children (8-15)	72.8	18.4	5.5	18.7
Adults (18-45)		80.9	13.2	4.8	21.0

This table shows the prevalence of the language used in various situations (family, university, work, and social media) between children and adults. It unveils that English is mostly applied in academic and professional circles particularly with adults. On the contrary, the younger generation speaks Urdu and local languages mostly at home, but in the university and social networks, they use English more often. The phenomenon of code switching is widespread in all age groups, especially in the field of informal communication, such as social media, when bilingual people confuse languages, which is indicative of the mobility of the language barrier in communication in ordinary life and the versatility of languages.

Table 4: Relationship between Cognitive Task Scores and Language Proficiency

This table shows the correlation between language proficiency (self-reported) in English, Urdu, and regional languages with cognitive task performance scores (memory, attention, and problem-solving).

Language Proficiency	Memory Task Correlation (r)	Attention Task Correlation (r)	Problem-Solving Task Correlation (r)
English Proficiency	0.65	0.72	0.78
Urdu Proficiency	0.58	0.61	0.60
Regional Language Proficiency	0.34	0.39	0.41
Code-Switching Frequency	0.48	0.51	0.53

The correlations provided in this table suggested high positive correlation between language proficiency and cognitive performance especially in those participants who are bilingual. English proficiency demonstrates the most positive correlation with cognitive performance in all activities, and next, it is Urdu and regional language proficiency. Bilingual individuals who claimed to be more proficient in both, English and Urdu, had better memory and attention as well as problem solving skills. Conversely, there were moderate correlations between proficiency in regional languages and cognitive tasks indicating that though the languages play part in cognitive processing, they may not be as beneficial to cognitive processing as English and Urdu in a multilingual situation such as that of Pakistan

Table 5: Identity Perception and Cognitive Performance (Correlation)

This table explores how the strength of participants' identification with certain social or cultural identities (e.g., national, ethnic, cosmopolitan) correlates with their cognitive performance on tasks requiring memory, attention, and problem-solving.

Identity Category	Memory Task Correlation (r)	Attention Task Correlation (r)	Problem-Solving Task Correlation (r)
National Identity (Pakistani)	0.45	0.41	0.44
Ethnic Identity	0.28	0.25	0.29
Cosmopolitan Identity	0.58	0.62	0.65
Religious Identity	0.31	0.33	0.30

This table indicates strong associations between identification by the different social identities of the participants (national, ethnic, cosmopolitan) to performance on the cognitive task performed. It has a very good positive relationship between a cosmopolitan identity and cognitive performance, which is in memory and problem solving activities. Attention and memory tasks have moderate national and religious identities meaning that national and religious identities can give cognitive stability in activities that demand attention. The correlations also remind us of the fact that the cognitive advantages of bilingualism are confounded with identity perceptions, in which people with more global or modern identities excel in cognitive tasks, perhaps because they have been exposed to a variety of different linguistic situations.

Table 6: Cognitive Task Scores by Socioeconomic Status (SES) and Language Use

This table shows how participants' SES (measured by parental education level) correlates with cognitive task performance (memory, attention, and problem-solving), considering their language use patterns.

SES Category	Language Use (English) (%)	Memory Task Score	Attention Task Score	Problem-Solving Score
Low SES (Below Bachelor's)	18.4	70.1	63.5	65.0
Middle SES (Bachelor's Degree)	47.6	75.3	68.4	71.6
High SES (Graduate Degree)	82.9	85.1	80.4	83.7

Table 6 indicates that there is a positive correlation between Socioeconomic Status (SES) which is determined by educational attainment and cognitive performance in all the domains measured. The performance is increasing systematically in order of the Low SES (Below Bachelor's) group and the High SES (Graduate Degree) group. The most significant contrast lies in the English Language Use as the percentage starts with 18.4 % in the lowest cohort and peaks with a predominant percentage of 82.9 percent in the highest. Likewise, the High SES group is always on the top in cognitive activities, and the scores of Memory Task lie between 70.1 % was 85.1 % and Problem-Solving between 65.0 % was 83.7 %.

Table 7: Language Use and Identity Conflicts (Percentage Reporting)

This table explores the degree to which bilingual participants report experiencing conflicts between their multiple linguistic and cultural identities, and how these conflicts relate to their language use.

Identity Conflict Type	Percentage of Participants Reporting	Language(s) Used During Conflict
Cultural Identity Conflict (e.g., balancing local vs.	65.2%	English, Urdu, Regional Languages

cosmopolitan identity)		
Language Prestige Conflict (e.g., language use perceived as socially or culturally inappropriate)	48.9%	English, Urdu
Religious Identity Conflict (e.g., language use contradicting religious beliefs)	31.7%	Urdu, Regional Languages
Family vs. Social Identity Conflict (e.g., language choice differing at home vs. in public)	56.4%	English, Urdu, Regional Languages

This table provides an emphasis on the prevalence of the identity conflicts that were reported by the participants who were bilingual with a substantial number (65.2%) having the experience of cultural identity conflict as a result of using a language. These subjects very frequently juggle with different identities (e.g., local vs. cosmopolitan), which causes cognitive strain. The most common are the clashes between the prestige of English (modernity and success) and the cultural value of local languages. Interestingly, over fifty percent of participants (56.4) have resolved such conflicts through code-switching which is an indication of the flexibility of bilinguals in negotiating their social and cultural identities, using strategic language.

Table 8: Hybrid Language Practices and Cognitive Task Performance
This table examines how the use of hybrid languages (code-switching and translanguaging) affects cognitive task performance, specifically in bilingual participants.

Hybrid Language Practice	Memory Task Performance	Attention Task Performance	Problem-Solving Task Performance
Code-Switching Regularly (Urdu-English, Regional-English)	80.2%	75.5%	78.3%
Translanguaging (mixing full sentences between languages)	78.9%	72.3%	74.6%
No Hybrid Practice	70.4%	62.8%	65.1%

The current tabular analysis investigates the correlation between the language hybrid practices (code-switching and translanguaging) and the performance of cognitive tasks. The data indicate that individuals that frequently embrace hybrid language use patterns, i.e. switch languages when conversing or mix languages when communicating by writing, have higher chances of being effective in memory, attention, and problem-solving tasks. The common use of the Urdish (Urdu-English) and Roman Urdu have a high correlation with enhanced cognitive ability particularly in the context that requires flexibility of the mind. The outcomes could suggest that hybrid language practices can be an element that causes cognitive flexibility since they enhance the ability of the brain to switch languages and situations.

5. Discussion
The findings of the present study give a thorough explanation of how the bilingualism impacts the cognitive development in Pakistan, and in particular, cognitive benefits, challenges, and socio-cultural issues. The comparative examination of the cognitive

performance of the various contexts and language proficiencies together with the correlations amid the language use, the identity and the socioeconomic status (SES) may provide this study with a good understanding of the dynamic contribution of the bilingualism to the cognitive processes in the memory, attention, and solving problems. The most important findings as reflected by the tables will then be addressed based on the contribution of the findings to our knowledge on the effect of bilingualism on our cognitive in a multilingual society like Pakistan.

Thinking Strongpoints of Bilingualism: Memory, Attention, and Problem-Solving

The initial significant conclusion of this research, which is reported in Table 1 shows that all cognitive activities including memory, attention, and problem-solving of bilinguals (especially, those who were proficient in both Urdu and English) were invariably higher compared to monolinguals. These findings corroborate the prior studies which imply that bilingualism affects the executive functions positively including the working memory and cognitive flexibility (Bialystok, 2009). The cognitive gains that are observed are particularly eminent on bilinguals who tend to be very proficient in both Urdu and English languages that are commonly used in learning and workplaces in Pakistan. The benefits of being a bilingual person are not limited to language skills but are generalized to cognitive functions that are vital to academic and everyday life success.

This high performance of bilingual participants is related to the Cognitive Development Theory (Piaget, 1973), which states that bilingual participants will tend to acquire high level of cognitive ability because they are always involved in activities that demand switching of languages as well as handling of tasks. This situation may be explained by the bilingual advantage that was found in this study because the connection between multiple languages involves rather complex cognitive difficulties. The results of this study confirm the hypothesis that bilingualism contributes to a better cognitive control and executive functioning, because it promotes flexibility in thinking since bilinguals have to constantly alternate between language and cognitive systems.

It is however notable that the cognitive advantages of bilingualism were higher in adults compared to a child as noted in Table 2. This implies that the cognitive benefits of bilingualism can be reinforced with age since the bilinguals gain more experience and exposure to other linguistic situations. This trend can be attributed to research which states that the cumulative advantages of bilingualism with time become significant especially on cognitive tasks which require more complex thinking and problem-solving (Kroll et al., 2012). In the Pakistani multilingual context where bilingualism is practised mainly at an early age, the findings indicate that the exposure to the use of multiple languages over a long period of time can heavily influence the cognitive capabilities of individuals as they advance in life.

Code-Switching and Hybrid Language Practices as Signs of Identity

The other notable conclusion of the research is the fact that the use of code-switching and hybrid language (e.g., Urdish and Roman Urdu) is one of the essential aspects of the bilingual experience in Pakistan. According to Table 7, over 55 percent of the bilingual participants (56.4 percent) note that they have been using code-switching to move between social and cultural identities, which is significant as a tool of language. Furthermore, Table 8 shows that the hybrid language practices, including the use of Roman Urdu in the digital communication, are strongly related with the improved cognitive performance with the tasks that require cognitive flexibility.

Results of Table 7 imply that bilingual people actively use code-switching as one of the ways of dealing with the multiple identities. The practice enables bilinguals to negotiate social, cultural, and linguistic needs of various contexts- whether at home, in the academic setting, or in the social media. Instead of being an indicator of linguistic incompetence, code-

switching turns out to be a complex communicative tool that helps to improve the capacity to operate in various linguistic and social contexts.

Moreover, the digital communication with bilingual Pakistanis through hybrid languages especially the Roman Urdu, is the prototype of the generation change in the manner bilinguals use their identities. Urdu translated into the Latin script is also becoming more popular among the youth in urban areas, namely Roman Urdu, which is a transcription of Urdu into the WhatsApp and Twitter/X social media app. This tends to show that new hybrid language practices are redefining linguistic identities, and this is their modern, cosmopolitan Pakistani identity which cuts across the old linguistic frontiers. The fact that Roman Urdu is now widely used indicates that the bilinguals are now establishing new and hybrid forms of identity that neither fits the dichotomy of English and Urdu which has been historically used to define the language environment of Pakistan.

The positive relationships between code-switching and cognitive performance indicated in Table 8 are indicative that the hybrid language practices could be cognitive tools and contribute to cognitive flexibility. Translanguaging and code-switching enable bilinguals to alternate among the various cognitive systems, hence developing mental agility. This result questions the classical belief that language-switching is a barrier to cognitive processing and instead helps to prove that language-switching hybrid practices are beneficial and can help facilitate cognitive growth (Garcia & Li, 2014).

Identity Conflicts in Bilinguals: Language and Social Belonging

The theme of identity conflicts as a result of using a language is a serious theme that came out of this research. According to Table 7, bilinguals often encounter cultural and other language-related identity problems, particularly, when going in and out of language with different social values. The most frequent disagreement is based on the contradiction between the prestige of English and authenticity of local languages, as 65.2% of the respondents said that they had problems in maintaining the balance between local and cosmopolitan identity.

Identity conflicts are high because of the convoluted social space in Pakistan in which English use is commonly connoted with modernity, social privilege, and cosmopolitanism, whereas regional languages are connoted with ethnic authenticity and which are frequently stigmatized within formal and social spaces. According to the interviews, bilingual people can have a conflicting feeling as they want to be seen as modern and educated (by speaking English) and as ethnic or cultural representatives (symbolized by regional languages). Such tensions also add to the cognitive strain in that the bilinguals have to continuously negotiate their social identities using language.

The results indicate that language is a vital determinant of cognitive as well as determining the sense of belonging and positioning of an individual. Bilingual Pakistani people, particularly people belonging to underprivileged ethnic groups, might have an extra psychological burden because their indigenous languages seem to have social inferiority. This highlights the need to take into account identity when examining the phenomenon of bilingualism since the process of linguistic choices is not only a mental activity; it is also highly engrained within the social context of the individual life.

Education and Language Policy Implications

The conclusions of this research have relevant implications in the policies of education and teaching of language in Pakistan. Since the cognitive benefits of bilingualism can be described generally as the memory, attention, and problem-solving, the argument of supporting bilingualism education in schools and universities is quite compelling. Nonetheless, the divide in language proficiency and cognitive performance based on the SES implies that the language policies must focus on the gaps in language access and performance, especially in the public schools which serve low-income families.

Also, the issues of identity confusion of the bilingual people especially in the English versus language conflict, indicates that the language education programs are more accommodating to the regional languages so that the students are able to retain their culture yet attain the cognitive advantage of bilingualism. The use of code-switching and translanguaging as valid forms of linguistic behavior should also be appreciated in language education as opposed to being perceived as language error.

Finally, Roman Urdu as a digital means of communication suggests that contemporary language programs need to incorporate hybrid language uses in the academic programs, with regard to the importance of digital platforms to the construction of contemporary Pakistani linguistic identities.

This paper provides a comprehensive study of cognitive benefits and constraints of bilinguals in Pakistan that shows that bilinguals have high chances of succeeding over monolinguals in cognitive tasks such as memory, attention and problem solving. However, there are also bilingual individuals who must cope with such problems as language interference, identity, and social value of language. The findings show the relevance of the language policies that support bilingualism and recognition of cognitive advantages of multilingualism.

Conclusion

This study has examined the complex impacts of bilingual on cognitive development of children and adults in Pakistan. This research has observed the cognitive advantage, difficulties, and the socio-cultural interaction of bilingualism within a multilingual society. The results indicate that bilingualism, especially Urdu and English, are found to have a high positive impact on cognitive skills, which included memory, attention, and problem solving. Nevertheless, some of the other bilingual problems that affect the Pakistani bilinguals include language interference, identity crisis and social and cultural tensions that come up as a result of dealing with different linguistic and cultural identities. The section is a summary of the key findings, implications, and a recommendation of future research and policy.

Mental Advantages of Bilingualism

A major conclusion in this piece of research is the apparent mental edge that comes with being a bilingual. The bilinguals that were bilingual in both Urdu and English language have always performed better in the cognitive tasks that were used to assess their memory, attention, and problem-solving abilities, compared to monolinguals. The findings can be considered in reference to the already available body of research on the cognitive advantages of bilingualism, indicating that bilingual people are better at cognitive regulation and mental flexibility as a result of ongoing language switching (Bialystok, 2009). In the environment of the country of Pakistan where English is mostly spoken as the language of education and professional growth, bilinguals speaking both Urdu and English are particularly well-skilled in the activities which presuppose cognitive flexibility.

The results also indicate that bilinguals have a better working memory which is essential in determining the academic success in their lives as well as in making everyday decisions. Bilingual cognitive benefits are especially evident in the adult population, which implies that the benefits of being bilingual in terms of cognition build up. The more bilingual people are exposed to the various linguistic situations, the more their cognitive system would be skilful in taking up complicated tasks, which involve the formation of various cognitive processes. This is in accordance with the Cognitive Development Theory (Piaget, 1973) where those who are involved in the routine complex cognitive processes, including having to deal with multiple languages, have a better cognitive development.

Additionally, it was also found out that the benefits of bilingualism on cognition were more pronounced among the bilinguals who spoke English and Urdu. This may be because of the status that English is associated with formal education and modernity, prestige and intellectual success in Pakistan. English-language proficiency is generally associated with the

better socio-economic background, and English-Urdu language switchers are likely to be exposed to the more complicated mental tasks in the school environment as well as the workplace. This experience enhances cognitive skills especially in activities that involve executive control like multitasking and decision-making.

Though the advantages in cognition are highly visible among bilinguals in cities, particularly those who are proficient in English, bilingual in Urdu and local languages (Punjabi, Pashto, or Sindhi) demonstrate slower mastery of cognitive tasks. Such distinction can be explained by the fact that regional languages are not necessarily the ones that the formal education system in Pakistan teaches and although they are closely linked to ethnic and cultural identity, they do not necessarily play such a role. Accordingly, it is possible that children and adults speaking regional languages as their native and social languages do not enjoy the same cognitive stimulation in school and other professional settings as those speaking English as well as Urdu.

Bilingualism Problems: Language Interferences and Identity Crises

Bilingualism has its own difficulties despite the cognitive benefits, particularly on people who have to work in the multilingual social settings such as Pakistan. One of the most frequent difficulties that were reported by bilingual participants of this work is language interference. The interference of language is where aspects of one language interfere with the other, and now there is a problem in fluent speech and comprehension. Regular participants in this study and in particular those who had to alternate between English and regional languages had incidences of confusion or hesitation especially when they had to alternate between languages in the midst of a conversation. This has not been a sole problem faced in Pakistan; studies about bilingualism have long recognized that language interference may be especially troublesome where the two languages interact in immediate context and in highly contextual settings.

To illustrate, a bilingual person who speaks English and Urdu may have a problem with maintaining words in his memory as he attempts to express something in Urdu because the mind will revert to English words. This mostly occurs with bilinguals whose levels of mastery of different languages vary. Language interference may cause frustration particularly to those who desire to communicate in a very clear manner only to be hampered by the conflicting nature of their language systems.

Besides having cognitive challenges, bilingual people in Pakistan are likely to have identity dilemmas regarding the use of language. Table 7 indicated that over fifty percent of the bilinguals (56.4 percent) stated that they had tensions between their social, cultural, and linguistic identities. Such conflicts of identity occur due to the understanding that English is the symbol of modernity, intellectual success, and vertical mobility whereas regional languages also have the status of ethnic authenticity and are often stigmatised at an official and public level. This causes a mental burden, as bilingual people have to balance between conflicting identities, especially in the workplace and academic settings where English is more privileged than the native languages.

Participants also said that they were torn between the need to identify themselves as modern, cosmopolitan people by using English and the need to retain their cultural roots which in many cases are associated with their native regional languages. On this point, Fatima (21 Sindhi speaking, Karachi) related that she felt she was not linked to her ethnic background when she spoke English in an academic institution, but she felt induced to speak English in order to preserve her education level. It is not just a battle of the words but a fight of belonging to a social and even cultural world. To bilingual personalities, language is considered not just a communication device, it is a way of achieving social identities.

The relation between Socioeconomic Status (SES) and Bilingualism

Socioeconomic status (SES) is another major determinant of bilingualism in Pakistan. As shown in Table 6, SES is important in defining the language proficiency as well as cognitive performance of the bilinguals. The respondents with higher SES background who are usually more skilled in English scored better in cognitive tasks especially those that needed memory, attention, and problem solving skills. These people are also more apt to employ English in educational and professional around them which gives them more exposure to cognitively challenging activities and settings.

On the other hand, those with lower SES backgrounds who speak regional language and Urdu did not do well in cognitive tasks. The fact that the lower SES participants use regional languages in their daily life might be a constraint on the exposure to cognitive advantages of being able to speak the English, which is the most dominant language in the formal education and work environment in Pakistan. The trend highlights the notion that language competency is closely associated with social capital and that individuals who have access to English have a cognitive advantage based on education and professional mobility.

The gradient of cognitive performance that is experienced in SES groups is a manifestation of linguistic capital theory (Bourdieu, 1991) according to which proficiency in the prestigious language such as English also offers a cognitive and social advantage to individuals. Since the English language is linked to higher learning and professionalism in Pakistan, master of the language enjoys access to higher cognitive stimulus and more cognitively demanding settings, resulting in enhanced cognitive performance in executive control and memory implying tasks.

Code-Switching and Hybrid Language Practices
Another aspect that is also mentioned in the research as having an impact on cognitive performance is the nature of code-switching and hybrid language practices. As it can be seen in Table 8, bilinguals who regularly code-switch (i.e., who regularly switch between languages when speaking) and who are translingual (who use a combination of languages when speaking or writing) demonstrate improved cognitive performance. This observation promotes the notion of the absence of code switching as a mere linguistic mistake or an indicator of linguistic incompetence and instead as a cognitive process that improves mental flexibility and executive control.

A lot of bilinguals can negotiate a complex social and cultural surrounding through code-switching. In code switching, bilinguals are also able to align their language use with some socialization identities based on the situation. This language plasticity is linked to cognitive ability to multitask and multi-viewpoint working which leads to better performance in memory, attention, and problem-solving functions.

Besides that, the appearance of the so-called hybrid languages such as the Roman Urdu, the example of translanguaging, i.e. the mixture of the Urdu and the English, has turned out to be a characteristic of the modern linguistic identity of the younger generations of the city inhabitants in Pakistan. The outburst of Roman Urdu on the Internet could be regarded as the evidence of how the bilinguals could construct new forms of language of identity that will not be based on the traditional boundaries between languages. The social media communication channel based on Roman Urdu is becoming increasingly popular, and it is one of the factors that can tell us how the hybrid language practices can facilitate new approaches to help cognitive processes. Such language mixing can also assist in accomplishment of mental advantages whereby the brain can be in a position to process more than just one language at a time.

Education Policy and Future Research Implications
The research results have great implications for the policy of education in Pakistan. Since bilingualism has been proved to have cognitive benefits, the education systems must be

modelled on the idea to promote bilingualism at a tender age. Nevertheless, the research also shows that language interference and identity conflicts are also actual problems of bilingual students, especially students representing the marginal ethnic groups. The policies must provide an inclusive learning atmosphere whereby the regional languages are encouraged to be used in addition to English and Urdu because language variety is considered to have both cognitive and cultural advantages.

Moreover, the socioeconomic differences in language proficiency and cognitive achievement imply that the policy on languages should take into consideration the divide of language access in relation to the SES. The reforms in education should revolve around education that gives equal opportunities to all students to master the English, Urdu, and regional languages so that students of both backgrounds are able to access bilingual education.

Lastly, the role of language identity in the development of cognition should also be further examined in future studies. Long-term studies of bilingual individuals would be beneficial in understanding the long-term cognitive advantages of bilingualism and how these advantages change based on various social and cultural factors.

Conclusion

To sum up, bilingualism in Pakistan offers immense cognitive benefits especially in memory, attention and problem-solving. Nevertheless, the bilingual individuals are also experiencing a challenge such as language interference and conflict of identities. These difficulties depend on the socioeconomic status of people, as those who have high SES receive more cognitive gains as bilingual because of being more proficient in English. The paper has shown that there is a necessity in the policy towards educational approaches in fostering bilingualism that are both cognitively advantageous and also sensitive to the predicament of bilinguals. Pakistan should enhance its citizens by providing inclusive, bilingual education that embraces regional languages as well as English and Urdu in order to be well prepared to operate in a more multilingual and globalized environment.

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