

Investigating the Perceptions of University Students on Multilingualism in Careers

Hira Iftikhar¹, Shabana Zafar², Amina Shah³

1 M.Phil Candidate, UMT, Lahore.

2 Program Head, BSELL, DLC, UMT, Lahore. Email: shabana.z2011@gmail.com

3 Lecturer UMT, Lahore. Email: amina.shah@umt.edu.pk

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Abstract

This study investigates the students' perceptions regarding multilingualism for careers and its significance in educational institutions and for students' professional lives in multilingual settings. This research explores how the local students whose first language was not English perceives multilingual environments in their practical lives, and whether their academic institution favor multilingualism in education and skill, and in what ways their backgrounds from different cultural and languages impact these thinkings. For data collection a mixed method approach was used. A five-point Likert scale was employed for online survey and for qualitative data semi structured interview recordings were collected. The qualitative data was further analyzed thematically while the quantitative data was represented in form of charts, percentages and graphs. The major findings show that maximum number of participants holds positive response in favor of multilingualism as a benefit in educational settings and for professional lives to work in multilingual environments. The factors show multilingualism boost students confidence level and flexibility in learning and providing diverse cultural exposures. In spite of that, some students show negative responses. Overall, the study finds out multilingualism to be an advantage for students in their educational institutions and for their future careers rather than as an obstacle. Further, this research aims to suggest the importance of multilingualism in educational institutions for improving students' careers.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Translanguaging, English language Teaching, Education and Skill, University, Cultural Backgrounds.

Background of the Study

Language is seen as a power and collections of words gifted by God. Language does not only mean words collected together in paragraphs and sentences, every word in a language has a separate meaning and separate identity. (Husain). Language has a very important functions in country progress, culture, history and economics. Since Pakistan is a multilingual country, it has a diverse variety of multi-cultural and multilingual backgrounds people specially in educational institutions. Urdu is considered as a lingua franca in Pakistan and as a local language speakers acquire it as their mother language. Other than Urdu, English was also dominant in Pakistan mainly speakers who used English were consider as upper class speakers' other local languages were seen as identity of lower- and middle-class speakers. As a result of mixtures of these languages multilingualism was promoted at university levels which sometimes creates barrier among students and sometimes provide the opportunities for their professional multilingual careers.

‘Multilinguals are considered those individuals who can speak more than one language in daily lives (Cenoz, 2013)’. Mostly Multilinguals were judged very unfair as people consider that they don’t know any language. (Spaces of multilingualism, 2005). People have made different perceptions on multilingualism some believe, it marks intelligent and educated people. Other thought it was necessity to be multilingual as to live in a society where people communicate in different languages. it is important to know other languages to create a sense of belonging (THOMASON, 2001).

According to Sevilya in her article describes that learning multiple languages is very important in this modern world for personal and professional life. The aims of this study were to examine why language learning is important in this globalized world when communication is increased internationally, people across different cultures work together and for business throughout different countries (Sevilya, 2025). In an article from the context of schools explains the system of writings skills within three different languages. The observation was made on these languages with multilinguals and their languages as compared to study each language separately. The findings reveals that each language is related to other differently but the multilinguals expand their ways of using that language (CENOZ, J., & GORTER, D., 2011). Eren in his article explore the four advantages of using translanguaging enhances structural and morphological level (Eren, 2016) , best for understanding educational materials, encourages students in speaking English and creates understandings among class fellows. The study conducted from the context of Pakistani university on translanguaging examines, the discussions made by students were informal in classrooms and what motivated them to use language differently. (Mujahid Shah et al., 2019). The findings reveal that although the Instructions were given in English but students use their native languages unconsciously while discussions. Such behavior shows the extensive use of native languages in everyday conversations among students.

The previous research foregrounded the benefits of Multilingualism as a cognitive ability. This article states that the individuals who were multilinguals have more intellectual capacities, better administrative power, and have greater abilities to perform certain tasks differently. This is an advantage of bilinguals having dual cognitive skills in solving problems and in making the right decisions. Further, this research encourages the multilingual settings in education from the very beginning of students for better intellectual and communal growth (Alisoy, 2024). Another research highlights the benefits of cultural diversity in Multilingualism. The article explores the advantage of multilingual settings for cultural mixtures, sharing common ideas between distinct societies (Hasan et al., 2024). Further, it also promotes peace creating supportive learning skills in different educational settings. Further, the benefits of multilingualism were explored through different societal, personal and educational perspectives”. It shows that individuals who speak more than two languages were more capable to switch from one language to another in communication, they have more flexible thinking across abstract concepts (Abdumalikova & Abduraximova , 2025). The findings conclude, multilingualism is not only useful for individuals who speak multiple languages but foe the whole society.

In recent study by Jennifer and Shakina “Students use multilingualism as a part of their individual language range”. (Jennifer & Shakina, 2019). English is being viewed as a skill that it should be improved with time. A skill is something which you practice more to make it more better and avoid mistakes. “When students used any other language which was not target language they are moving away in improving their English proficiency which was students’ goal.” Students who don’t practice English they were at risk of losing English language proficiency. Translanguaging instructions allow students who are put down by unilingual English speakers. According to Journal of English Education Translanguaging has

been used in pesantren based education systems, where students use to multiple languages. This article aims to explore the benefits of using translanguaging particularly in English clubs and to check the significance of using this tool for increasing communication skills. The findings of this article suggest, translanguaging is a flexible tool it allows the students to mix language naturally and it boost confidence and enhance creativity in students. This technique helps the students to switch language without any fear of making mistakes that is a major hesitation marker for students to use second language. (Alifatul et al., 2025). “Translanguaging plays a key role in supporting communication and learning in the multilingual environment of the English club at a pesantren-based school.”

The existing studies focuses on the benefits of multilingualism in universities. This study aims to highlights the problems along with benefits of university students. Furthermore, the previous studies have explored how multilingualism supports effective communication in classrooms. This study investigates the effectiveness of multilingualism within classrooms and outside classroom, university premises if students will be working in a multilingual environment in future. In addition, the existing literature deals with only English speakers, this study identifies the perceptions of students from locals as well as overseas students. This study explores whether the current educational curriculum benefits university students for local and international jobs.

a) Theoretical Framework:

This research employs Translanguaging theory by Ofelia Garcia (García, 2016) as a theoretical Framework. This theory provides necessary reasons in order to understand the use of Multilingualism in Educational and Professional settings. According to this theory: The Multilingual speakers have single blended linguistic collections through which different types of linguistic features are drawn to communicate constructively. According to Ophelia Translanguaging is a dynamic process in which multilingual individuals use multiple languages fluently in order to establish meaning, increase understanding and accelerate communication. In Universities’ where multilingual environment is supported, students don’t use only one separate language such as speak in only English, Punjabi or Urdu but they mixed elements from all languages they know depending on the situations and context and the language of other person.

This flexibility provides students supportive environment they discuss issues with their peers and teachers confidently. In addition, translanguaging theory also provides support for local and international careers. By using Translanguaging theory as a theoretical framework this article will provides the perception of students on Multilingualism. Furthermore, it helps to explains how students are utilizing their current educational settings and how it will help them out to work in multilingual environments for future career opportunities.

Objectives:

1. To identify the perceptions of non-native English students on multilingualism
2. To explore whether the current curriculum of education benefits students for multilingual job environment or not
3. To investigates the factors observed in students from different cultural background

Research Questions:

- Q.1. What are the perceptions of non-native English speakers on Multilingualism?
- Q.2. Does the current curriculum of education benefits students for local and international jobs?
- Q.3. What are the factors observed in students from different cultural backgrounds?

Significance of the study:

This study will help us to investigate the perceptions of university students on multilingualism. This would help us to explore the benefits of educational institutions helping students in preparing them for professional lives and to highlight the factors in different cultural background students. It further provides insights for students to work globally; it explores how local jobs can help students to understand their own cultural values as well as support others to get benefited in different ways. In case of international jobs multilingual students are highly valued.

Scope and Delimitation:

The research focuses on the perceptions of university students for professional lives from a sociolinguistic perspective. Although the findings may not be generalized to every student from each semester, they provide valuable insights from sixth to eighth semester students mainly young adults. The sample size is limited to only one university students from 19-25 age groups, which may not represent the entire population.

Data Analysis

The data was collected to analyze the thematic patterns observed among different linguistic and cultural background students. Different techniques were employed for instance the recordings of each student were first listen carefully, then each recording was transcribed into English as students were allowed for code switching. Based on recordings different factors were observed that was common among participants. For quantitative data analysis online questionnaire was conducted which includes four sections.

A). Presentation of Data

For the quantitative data each section was comprised of further five points; the points were first analyzed separately through percentage charts. Then the sections were analyzed collectively through graphs. This section will aim to achieve the first and second objective of this study about the perceptions of non-native English speakers and the one section of questionnaire will highlight the second objective which was to explore whether current educational setting help students for careers or not. The charts for sections one point were given below: **Analysis for RQ1:** Perceptions of non-native speakers on Multilingualism.

b). Implementation of data analysis Techniques:

The findings for qualitative data reveal that about 80% of students used English language in classrooms and 20% students used Urdu as well as English. The reason which was noted, due to students first language interference the teachers entertain Urdu language and it also depends on the nature of course. The international students and from the literature department mostly prefer to use English Language as they were required to speak in English. About 90% students think multilingual classrooms is very helpful because sometimes it encourages students with low proficiency to participate actively in classroom discussions. Furthermore, students responded positively on teachers' attitudes

International and local students with different linguists' backgrounds agreed that teachers change their medium of language if they don't understand anything. While 70% participants like to interact in English other thought it was just necessity to speak in English with the instructors during classroom hours. Students depending on their language backgrounds like to interact in their local languages inside university premises that employs diverse multilingual and multicultural experiences. 80% students agree on their university education as a source of interacting people with different cultural backgrounds. In this way students get an opportunity to explore different culture and experience languages by making friends. Among all participants 80% students agree that their current institution would be very helpful for

them if they would be working in a multilingual environment. Students find university as a source of diverse language and cultural mixture.

Many thoughts university education does not matters for your professional life but your skills matter. Further, the questionnaire from participants explores the role of educational settings for multilingual careers. The results were shown first in the form of table and then in form of graph. The questionnaire was divided into four sections first part include about the demographic information of participants. The second section is based on education and skills; third section comprise 5 questions on perceptions on multilingualism. The last section includes the importance of multilingualism in careers.

c). Results & Discussions:

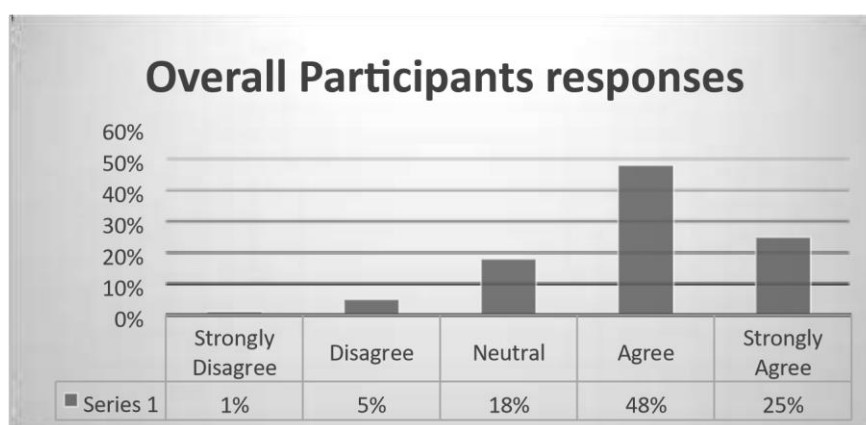
No. of items Section2(Education and skill)	SA	A	N	D	SD
My current institution has improved my second language speaking skills.	25%	52%	17%	1.6%	4%
There are opportunities to use multiple languages while classroom discussions.	27%	45%	25%	3%	0%
Use of L1 helps me to understand L2 concepts	17%	54%	21%	8%	0%

Multilingual classroom helps in reducing my anxiety while presentation	29%	39%	25%	7%	0%
I have improved my writing skills through multiple exposure to languages in classroom	29%	49%	19%	3%	0%
Section3(Perceptions on Multilingualism)	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. The subjects require more than two language interference	5%	40%	42%	13%	0%

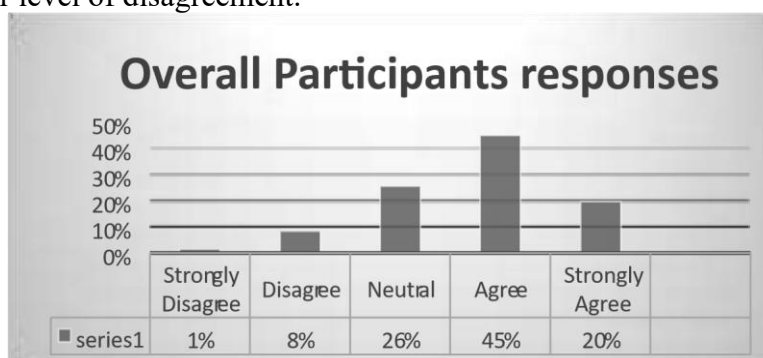
2. The teachers entertain the use of Urdu while presentations	9%	25%	34%	27%	5%
Multilingual environment helps students build confidence	23%	60%	16%	1%	0%
I think multilingualism in university supports diverse culture	31%	57%	11%	0%	1.3%
Multilingualism is really an advantage in university education	30%	43%	25%	1%	1%
Section4(Multilingualism in careers)	SA	A	N	D	SD
My university prepares me to work confidently in professional environment through multiple exposures of language	15%	53%	32%	0%	0%
Lack of communication skills in English hinders me to work in an international company	15%	47%	26%	11%	1%
Using multiple language is suitable only for local jobs	3%	32%	30%	28%	7%
Being Multilingual creates a balance for me in local as well as international careers	17%	50%	29%	4%	0%

Working in both local and international settings only require confidence, your language doesn't matter	4%	25%	31%	25%	15%
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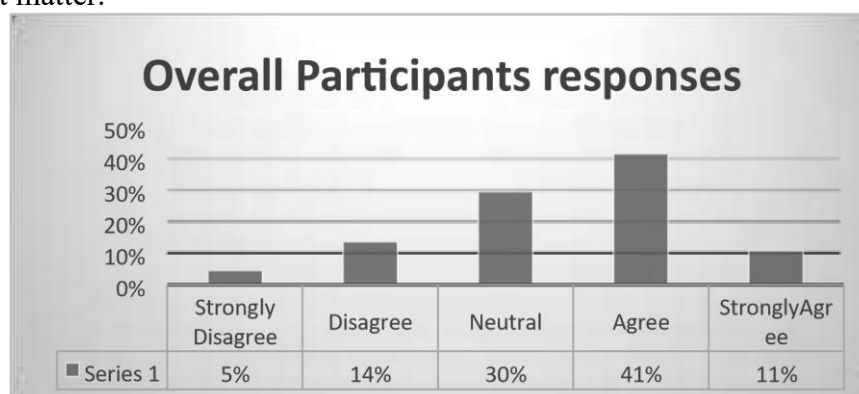
Analysis for RQ2: Current curriculum of education benefits students for Multilingual job environments or not. The overall results for quantitative data on the section **Education and skill** shows that most of students fall in between strongly agree and agree. Among all participants 25% students strongly believed that their current institution has improved their speaking skills and there are many opportunities to use multiple languages in classroom discussions. 48% students specifically agree, this result indicates that maximum number of participants shows positive response. If we combine both the positive percentages then it will be 73% showing the importance of multilingualism in classrooms. Around 18% students were neutral that means this specific number of students was neither in favor nor in against, but they showed uniformity in views in case of educational settings. In contrast 5% students disagree that multilingual classrooms reduced their anxiety level while 1% students show a smaller number of percentages showing negative perceptions on multilingualism.



The results for se cond section **Perceptions on Multilingualism** indicates 45% students show positive response that the subject requires more than two language interference. 20% students strongly agree which indicates positive response by the participants. 26% students were neutral in their opinions which means they indicates stable thoughts as there are many reasons when multilingualism happens in classroom, the multilingual classrooms build their confidence level. Only 8% students represent negative response, similarly 1% participants show higher level of disagreement.



The response rate for the last section **Multilingualism in careers** shows moderate positive agreement by students. A majority of 41% students strongly believed their university education has prepared them well to work confidently in professional job environments. Whereas, 30% students express fair perceptions that a lack of communication skills in English hinders them to work in an international company. 41% students agree using multiple languages will help them in their future careers. 14% participants disagree that their university doesn't give them opportunities to work in multinational environments and also shows disagreement such as being multilingual is only helpful for local jobs and not suitable for international jobs. Further, relatively less percentage of participants almost 5% students strongly disagree on working in international and local jobs require only confidence and your language doesn't matter.



The analysis of the article is based on mixed method approach. By analyzing the qualitative and quantitative research designs the findings of article reveals the perceptions of non-native English speakers on multilingualism depends heavily on the context of their local language usage. The qualitative findings reveals that students are more comfortable in using their local languages while classroom discussions. Multilingual environment facilitate learning as most of the participants are overseas, they use English as their second language. As stated by Sevilya (Sevilya, 2025) I agree with her that learning multiple languages is very important in this globalized world. In this article these findings prove the fact in terms of international careers exposure of multilingual environment will support your professional life. Other local students used their local languages and they feel comfortable in it.

Multilingualism is perceived as an important factor in terms of local and international jobs. Most of the students show positive response on multilingualism in their jobs careers whether it is local or international.

These findings also perceive through translanguaging theory which emphasize the theoretical value of adaptable language usage in practical communication. The individual speakers from diverse backgrounds adapting different social and cultural concepts makes multilingualism as an importance professional competence skill. The graphical representation of data reveals that most of university students shows positive responses on the perceptions of multilingualism for their professional lives. Students agree with the educational intuitions as being helpful for them to pursue their careers. Multilingualism provides students an opportunity to switch between languages in classrooms which lowers the student's anxiety level and help to boost their confidence. Furthermore, the students find multilingualism as an advantage. They consider their university as an opportunity to experience diverse linguistic background which would definitely help them in professional life. The findings suggest that although the participants are nonnative English speakers but they prefer to speak English language in classrooms most of the time to sound better. The ratio of students for international jobs was comparatively high than local careers.

Many factors were observed in findings which suggests that due to multilingual environments students explore diverse cultures of their peers. The cultural backgrounds of different students motivated each other. According to (Atifa & Zamna , 2023) multilinguals especially Urdu speakers were discriminated due to minority language in favor of English that also contributes to this research. Sometimes due to lack of proficiency and vocabulary in a language may causes embracement and misunderstandings while communicating to natives of that language. For the **Objective 3**. To investigates the different factors in recordings. The following factors were observed which was common in recordings.

Factors observed among students in recordings Multilingualism serves flexibility:

Multilingual classrooms enable flexibility for the students while interacting with teachers. **As one of the participants responds in answer to** “What will you do if you don’t understand the teacher’s medium of language due to your different first language?”

She responds: “I will probably report the higher authorities that I am facing issues in understanding the teacher’s language”. The teachers most of the time ask students to visit them to creates a positive learning support for students. Students change their language to local language while classrooms which provides the flexibility to resolve their issues. This factor also relates with the existing finding of article by Alisoy (Alisoy, 2024) which explains multilingualism as an intellectual benefit for multilinguals. This elaborates multilingualism serves as flexibility and this dual advantage of bilingualism helps students to change their language in order solve problems and decisions more confidently. Further, the study by Alifatul (Alifatul et al., 2025) also supports the fact, Translanguaging is a flexible tool for enhancing confidence and switching languages without the fear of making mistakes and hesitation.

Builds confidence and encourage active participation:

Most of the local students said they used both Urdu and English language in classrooms depending on the subject and the instructor. But most of students are comfortable in speaking Urdu language as it is their native language.

A participant said: “Most of the time I speak Urdu as it is our native language and everyone in my surrounding do understand Urdu”. The participants show through multilingualism every student was able to participate actively.

Participant 2: “Multilingual classroom encourages active participation as students who don’t understand English well, may get a chance to communicate in Urdu with English and solve their problems. Further, the students with different native language other than Urdu were more comfortable in speaking English language.

Participant 3: “I speak English in classroom and I am 100% comfortable in speaking English”.

Supporting this study with the existing study by (Mujahid Shah et al., 2019) the findings indicates that the students were motivated to use languages differently and they feel confident in this multilingual classroom settings. Although the instructions were given in English as one of student stated if they don’t understand English language instructions they communicate in Urdu unconsciously that supports with Mujahid study “students use their native languages unconsciously for active participation and to feel confident”.

Multilingualism Provides exposure to Diverse Cultures:

Most of the students show positive response that being studying in a multicultural university they get a chance to interact students with different backgrounds.

One participant responded: “University provides us intercommunication between different culture people. I think this environment is enough for me as it gives me a good exposure to know other culture languages”. Other students responds that university is not enough to learn about other culture there should be proper programs at university level which we can adopt to learn different languages.

Participant 2: “No, I don’t think only university education is important we can do different explorations; we can visit different countries spend time with locals and live together in this way we can understand their language”.

This factor supports the study given by (Hasan et al. , 2024) that explains the importance of multilingual environments for enhancing diversity of culture and shared values between different societies with different languages. It favors the current findings of this study as students says university provides them intercommunication exposures. Further, the results don’t fully support this point as many students believe diversity in culture can be more supported if we can do explorations of different countries.

Multilingualism in Professional Life:

The university as a blend of different linguistic backgrounds provides students to experience different language and most students take advantage of this setting to work in multinational companies. Students get scholarships in different countries which also gave them opportunities to experience multiple languages.

One participant said: “Because we already speak English with faculty and Punjabi with friends in university premises. In future if we get a chance to work in same multinational environment our current institution will definitely help us to work there. Mostly students show positive response in favor of university but two students were against:

“I don’t think being multilingual is important, I think the skills matters if I have skills then I can adjust anywhere”.

The overall findings reveal that the use of first language helps majority of students to understand their second language concepts these findings contribute to the Translanguaging theory by Ofelia Gracia (García, 2016) that aligns with this study which suggest “Multilingual speakers have single blended linguistic collections through which different types of linguistic features are drawn to communicate constructively”. It explains students don’t use separate language but mix linguistic concepts to facilitate communication. Thus, the constructive student’s response show multilingualism as effective learning resource rather than a barrier in institutions.

a). Key findings:

This research investigates the perceptions of university students on Multilingualism for careers. The findings of this article reveals that students show maximum positive response in favor of Multilingualism as an advantage rather than as an obstacle. By analyzing both the qualitative and quantitative data the findings explains multilingualism provides flexibility and boost students confidence level in classrooms. Furthermore, it increases students’ active participation as it allows language mixture practices that serves encouraging learning environment. This study also claims Multilingualism practices provides diversity in cultures which serves as an advantage for students to explore other cultures and their languages.

The quantitative data reveals that majority of students believes multilingualism improves their writing and communication skills for second language. The study finds out university provides students opportunities to work well both for local and international jobs through multilingual environment. However, some students feel lack of communication skills and being multilingual is helpful only for local jobs. Overall, the questionnaire and qualitative

data show positive response for being multilingual in professional life was really an advantage.

b). Contribution of the study:

This study provides valuable contributions to the field of sociolinguistics and multilingualism in English language Teaching. It helps to provide importance of multilingualism in institutions and further professional lives of students in career development. The use of mixed method approach using qualitative and quantitative data for questionnaire and interviews provides in depth perceptions of students and their experiences while studying in multilingual institutions. Furthermore, the Translanguaging theory by Ophelia shows that the Multilingual speakers have single blended linguistic collections through which different types of linguistic features are drawn to communicate constructively. This means Multilingual practices at educational institutions serves as a benefit for students rather than an obstacle for academic and professional life.

c). Delimitations/Limitations of the study:

This study has several limitations the data is collected from relatively a smaller number of participants, only one university is taken into account for sample size through interviews and surveys due to which it is more generalized. Further, the research is limited to only academic context inside and outside classroom within university premises. Due to time constraints the population of this study is limited to only students, it may include faculty members and workers.

Future researchers may add vast sample size using different techniques. Furthermore, other university students can also be added in questionnaires which provides a large-scale data. This research can also be expanded through different context other than educational institutions where multilingualism exists widely. Also, the time limit for this research can be enhance to observe students for longer period of time. The perceptions can also be taken from people working in any multinational companies to compare it with students' perceptions.

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