

Research Paper

Introducing a Scale on the Socio-Cognitive Dynamics of Contact Language Learning in the Multilingual Context in India

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ABSTRACT

This paper introduces a novel scale that will be used to explore the socio-cognitive factors influencing contact language learning in India's bilingual landscape. Recognizing the uniqueness of India in linguistic diversity, this research project explores the role of social and cognitive processes in regional languages and English while emphasizing related issues like the implications of social interaction, cognitive benefits of multilingualism and obstacles experienced during language learning and the strategies used by learners to overcome those obstacles. It has a standardized questionnaire that sought information from an apparently representative sample of languages and, therefore, reproduces sensitivities of the sociocultural context within India toward attitudes toward language or code-switching. English serves as the lingua franca that would provide socio-economic mobility along with cross-cultural exchanges, while regional languages serve to reinforce cultural identity. Bilingualism will enhance cognitive flexibility, problem-solving abilities, and openness to culture. The study thus calls for an inclusive language policy that supports both linguistic skill development and socio-cognitive growth within multilingual communities.

Keywords: *Multilingualism, Socio-Cognitive Dynamics, Contact Language, India, Multilingualism, Social Interaction, Cognitive Gains, Language Attitudes, Code-Switching, Language Policy*

India is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, and its complex multilingual environment is a product of the numerous languages that coexist. According to the Census of India 2011, there are scheduled languages listed under 22, besides hundreds of other languages and dialects. This linguistic diversity promotes a bilingual and multilingual society where individuals are commonly exposed and compelled to converse in more than one language in everyday affairs.

The phenomenon of bilingualism and multilingualism in India is not limited to simple linguistic terms but has more culturally, socially, and cognitively relevant dimensions. Contact languages, such as Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, and Bengali, have significance in personal, professional, and schooling contexts that underpin how one relates to one's

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immediate social surroundings. Contact language learning, or the learning of additional languages caused by social and cultural contacts, assumes a particular importance in the Indian context. English plays a role as a bridge language for the job market, professional development, or higher education. Nevertheless, regional languages remain personal means of communication and vehicles of culture.

Such dynamic play between languages and contexts compels a higher level of insight into the socio-cognitive mechanisms that govern bilingual and multilingual learning processes. Objectives of the paper: The paper attempts to look at the very meeting point of social and cognitive factors in contact language learning in India by exploring, in particular, the socio-cognitive dynamics about how bilingual people negotiate their linguistic environment and manage multiple languages in different contexts.

More specifically, the focus areas have been four: (1) how social interaction impacts language acquirers, (2) cognitive advantages of bilingualism, (3) the problems that Indian language learners meet, and (4) strategies which Indian language learners use to overcome the problems.

Social Interaction in Language Learning Vygotsky's sociocultural theory provides the framework for understanding the significant role social interactions play in language acquisition. Learning, according to Vygotsky (1978), is intrinsically a social process through which people construct knowledge by interacting with their environment. In the bilingual context, learning language is often mediated by familial, educational, and social interactions. For example, children growing up in bilingual families learn multiple languages fluently as they are exposed to various languages by parents, siblings, and community members around them. This is consistent with the idea of the "zone of proximal development," in which learners master languages when aided by more-advanced language users in their surroundings. Social contact plays an important role in the acquisition of the second/third language as well as in the determined intentions to apply. Schools and workplaces often obligate people to convey their intentions through more than one language, thereby creating a rich context for practice and language use. A person may speak his regional language at home but Hindi or English at work or college, creating opportunities for insulation and experiential learning.

These interactions not only facilitate language learning but also influence an individual's sense of linguistic identity, shape up his social affiliations, and cultural orientation.

Cognitive Benefits of Bilingualism

Cognitive theories of bilingualism, such as the hypothesis of bilingual advantage, offer evidence for the notion that multilingualism enhances certain of the cognitive functions, most markedly executive control processes (Bialystok, 2009). Bilinguals are known to "code-switch," or switch between languages quite frequently, a phenomenon thought to support cognitive flexibility, problem-solving skills, and inhibitory control. The cognitive benefits are significant in India, where people switch between several different linguistic systems in everyday communication.

Psycholinguistic research has established that bilingual children are their parents' best assets in performing tasks associated with attentional control, working memory, and multitasking. They are constantly required to control interference from other languages they know, which

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sharpens executive functions in the brain. In this Indian backdrop, it transcends all language use, impacting wider cognitive capabilities besides professional competencies to think critically and adapt in other social contexts.

Challenges in Language Learning Researchers have emphasized the cognitive and social advantages of bilingualism; however, the Indian language learner experiences problems related to the lack of resources and opportunities for practice in a second, third, or more languages. For instance, the limited availability of educational materials and exposure to languages such as English slows the achievement pace in some rural schools. Besides, the fear of making a mistake or even social stigma may reveal the shyness in language learners. Social expectations and peer pressure is also one more factor that can mold up the learning experience. For example, in cities, knowledge of English is ascribed with enhancement of socio-economic status and professional prosperity.

It creates a greater burden on the communicators to excel in the use of the good English, at times to the detriment of their indigenous or local mother tongues. Psychological pressure is a barrier to proper learning.

Strategies for Language Learning Challenges There are various ways that have been utilized to exit this stage. Formal education, particularly immersion programs that encourage regional languages with English, can be very effective. Formations of media exposures, including television and movie and electronic resources, also form a potent tool in language acquisition.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis, 1985 posited that learners learn best when given comprehensible input which is just a little above their functioning level. Indian television would offer multilingual content; the internet would provide them with the wide opportunity to get exposed to new languages in ordinary, lifelike usage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Socio-cognitive factors therefore influence both bilingual and multilingual learning processes and outcomes by shaping language acquisition in a bilingual and multilingual environment. Studies have shown that bilinguals are often cognitively more superior to their monolingual peers, as they have better working memory and may multitask more proficiently as well as think more critically than monolinguals (Bialystok, 2009). Such cognitive strengths are resulted from the bilingual requirements to handle a backlog of two linguistic systems simultaneously, resulting in greater cognitive flexibility and executive functioning.

In the Indian context, where linguistic heterogeneity is a ubiquitous feature of everyday life, social interaction is seen to be the central modality of second language acquisition. Families, peer groups, and workplaces often represent environments within which differentially bilingual individuals are exposed to and use multiple languages. Khubchandani (1997) maintains that social contexts alone are important in bilingualism because it is in social contexts that the practical everyday use of languages-the handles or levers which carry through language-function-directly related to functional adequacy in everyday communication-is provided. The intergenerational transmission of regional languages in the home and the pressure to learn Hindi and English for professions and education make their

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linguistic tapestry richly multilingual and gives language learners much to navigate within and between these.

English, as a contact language, has gained greater importance in India also with globalization and socio-economic mobility. According to Kachru (1990), "English serves as a bridge language that can create linkages between India's various linguistic groups." A growing significance of English in educational institutions and workplaces calls for examining the way Indian bilinguals balance the acquisition of English with regional languages. This, in turn, reflects not only the cognitive process but also socio-cultural dimensions, as individuals confront choices of language usage apparently designed by social expectations, professional demands, and personal identity. An understanding of this dynamic is necessary for the more significant implications of learning any language in the multilingual context of India.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This study consisted of bilingual or multilingual participants spread across India from various regions of the country. They were a linguistic and cultural diverse group. No limit was fixed on the age group, including this group as adolescent as well as elderly persons, which would ensure there was a pretty wide, diverse set of respondents. In all, 150 people were interviewed. They came from a diversified linguistic background representing Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, and Bengali. They represent the diverse multilingual nature of India, one where regional languages coexist not only with other regional languages and dialects but also with English—a perfect place in which to study bilingualism and multilingualism. The participation of different linguistic and age groups represented a range of experiences and challenges in contact language learning, which the study could capture.

Instruments

A structured questionnaire was used as a principal data collection tool that aimed to measure and understand socio-cognitive processes underlying language acquisition in a bilingual condition. The questionnaire had six sections that included a combination of closed and open-ended questions. The first section gathered demographic information on age, gender, residential region, and the first language spoken at home. The second section focuses on the context of language learning—that is, the age of second language acquisition, how participants were introduced to the second language, and the languages they used in social interaction. Finally, the socio-cognitive aspects were investigated, in which issues such as the role of social interactions, frequency of code-switching, cognitive benefits, and cultural openness would be addressed.

These sections went on to investigate Indian patterns of contact language learning, learning experiences and challenges, and open-ended questions about the individual effects of bilingualism.

Data collection and presentation

The questionnaire was distributed via the internet through Google Forms to distributed bilingual and multilingual across various regions of India. Participants were briefed on the study's objectives, including the focus on socio-cognitive dynamics of language learning in a bilingual context. All respondents gave their informed consent before answering the questionnaire, which guaranteed that they were aware of their participation being voluntary

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and that their responses would remain confidential. The response was given at their own time, and a week was allocated to fill the survey. The responses were anonymous to avoid exposing the identity of the respondents and to provide candid, unbiased responses. By remaining anonymous, the respondents can give more candid and reflective answers with regard to their own experiences in learning other languages.

The responses were then collected after the data collection period and prepared for further analysis to understand the socio-cognitive factors that influence bilingualism and multilingualism in India.

Data analysis

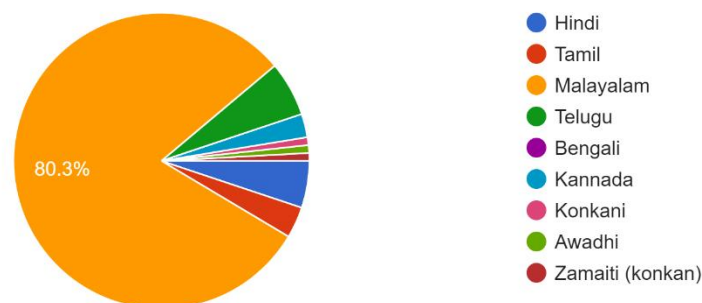
To assess the socio-cognitive dynamics of the context language learning in the bilingual context, the sample data can be divided into three: 1. Socio-cognitive dynamics in Language Attitude 2. Social-cognition of language learning and 3. Social-cognition in language use. The scores are used to examine these variables.

1. Socio-cognitive dynamics in language attitude

Language attitudes, which encompass individuals' perceptions, beliefs, and emotional responses toward languages or dialects, play a significant role in shaping language acquisition and social interactions. In bilingual and multilingual contexts, such as India, these attitudes are influenced by various socio-cognitive dynamics. These dynamics involve the interaction between social factors like cultural identity, societal expectations, and peer influences, as well as cognitive processes such as memory, problem-solving, and critical thinking. In India's linguistically diverse environment, language attitudes affect choices between languages like English, valued for socio-economic advancement, and regional languages, which are closely tied to cultural identity. This study explores the socio-cognitive factors that shape language attitudes in bilingual contexts, examining their impact on language learning, identity formation, and social integration. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for creating inclusive language policies and improving educational approaches in multilingual societies.

4. Primary Language(s) Spoken at Home:

117 responses



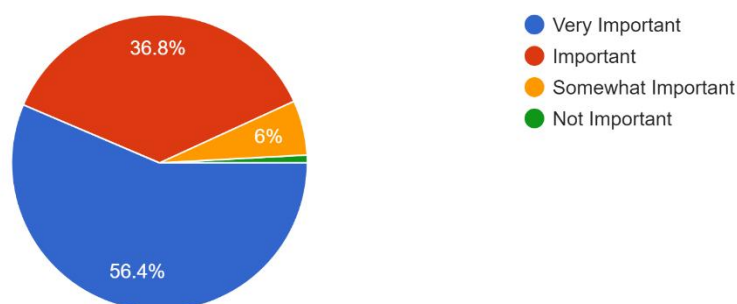
The data on primary languages spoken at home, gathered from 117 respondents, reveals significant linguistic diversity. A large majority, 80.3%, report Malayalam as their primary language. Other prominent languages include Tamil, Hindi, Telugu, and Bengali, reflecting the rich multilingual context of India. Additionally, languages such as Kannada, Konkani, Awadhi, and Zamaiti (spoken in the Konkan region) are also represented, underscoring the

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rarely code-switch, and no participants indicated that they never mix languages. This distribution highlights the prevalence of multilingualism in social interactions, with most individuals incorporating multiple languages into their daily communication to varying degrees.

14. How do you rate the importance of English as a contact language in India?

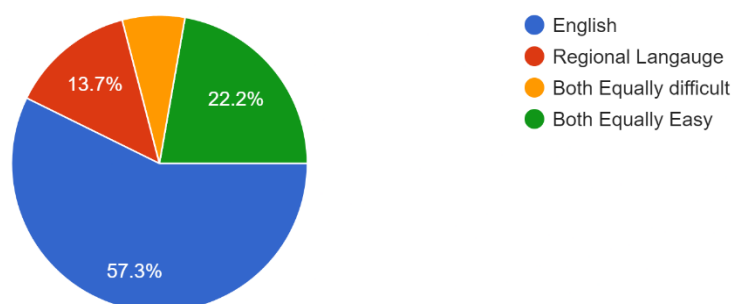
117 responses



Out of 117 responses, the majority of participants rated English as an important contact language in India. Specifically, 56.4% of respondents consider English to be important, while 36.8% view it as very important. This indicates a strong perception of English as a critical language for communication in India's multilingual context. Only 6% of respondents rated English as "somewhat important," and no one considered it unimportant. These findings highlight English's significant role as a bridge language across diverse linguistic groups, emphasizing its influence in both personal and professional domains.

15. Do you find it easier to learn English or other regional languages (e.g., Hindi, Tamil)?

117 responses

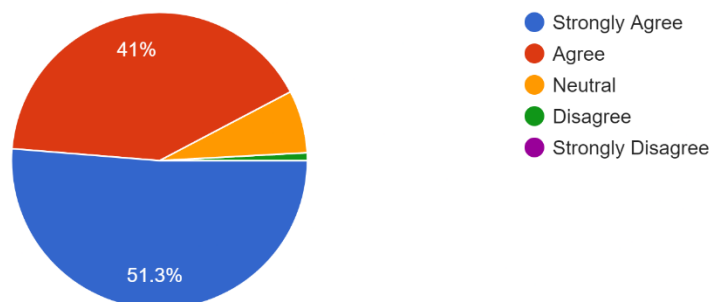


Out of 117 responses to the question of whether participants found it easier to learn English or other regional languages (e.g., Hindi, Tamil), the majority—57.3%—reported that English is easy to learn. A smaller portion, 22.2%, found both languages equally difficult. Only 13.7% of respondents indicated that learning regional languages was easier for them compared to English. These findings suggest a relatively balanced perception of language learning difficulty among bilingual or multilingual individuals, with most participants viewing the acquisition of both English and regional languages as manageable.

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19. Do you feel that being bilingual/multilingual has helped you in academic or professional settings?

117 responses



Of the 117 respondents, a significant majority reported positive perceptions regarding the impact of bilingualism or multilingualism in academic or professional settings. There is 51.3% of participants agreed that being bilingual or multilingual had benefited them, while 41% strongly agreed, indicating a high level of perceived advantage.

This suggests that most respondents believe their ability to speak multiple languages has enhanced their academic or professional experiences, potentially through improved communication skills, cognitive flexibility, or access to diverse opportunities. A smaller portion remained neutral, while very few expressed disagreements, highlighting the overall positive correlation between language proficiency and success in these settings.

2. Socio-cognition of language learning

The socio cognition in language learning refers to the interaction of the social and cognitive factors which influence the language learning. In the bilingual/multilingual context in India, the social interaction, cultural identity and societal expectation shapes language learning, and also enhances cognitive ability such as enhanced memory, problem- solving, and multitasking arising from managing multiple languages. Vygotsky's theory on socio- cultural and Bialystok's research on bilingualism highlights the importance of social collaboration and cognitive control in language learning. In India, the regular practice of switching between languages promotes cognitive flexibility and enhances social adaptability, positioning bilingualism as a key advantage in personal, academic, and professional growth.

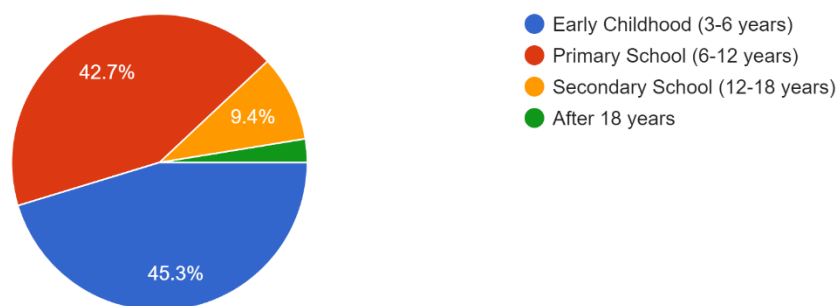
Statement 5. Language Proficiency in first language:

The statement seeks the capability of using a first language (mother tongue) in different domains as shown in the pie chart of statement 4 in socio- cognitive dynamics of language attitude.

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6. At what age did you begin learning a second language?

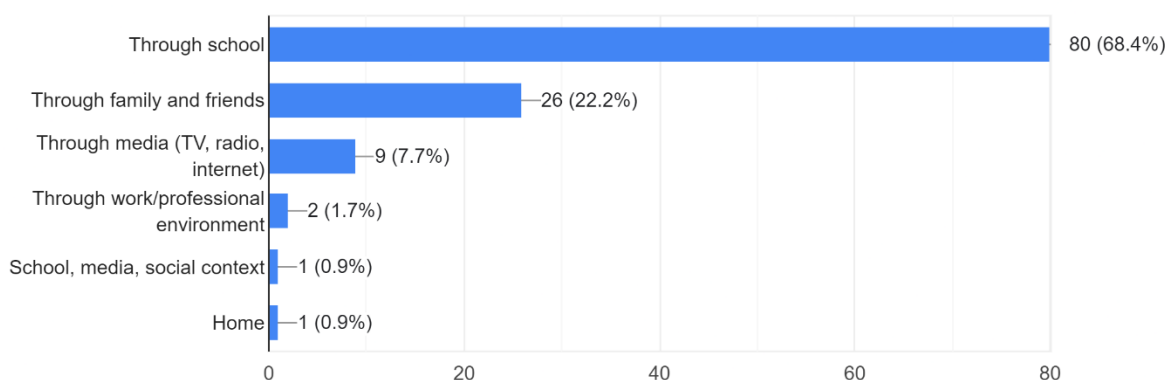
117 responses



Among the 117 participants, 45.3% reported beginning a second language acquisition in early childhood (3-6 years), while 42.7% started during primary schooling (6-12 years). A smaller portion of 9.4% began learning a second language during secondary school (12-18 years) and there were few who learned second language after 18 years.

7. How were you primarily introduced to the second language?

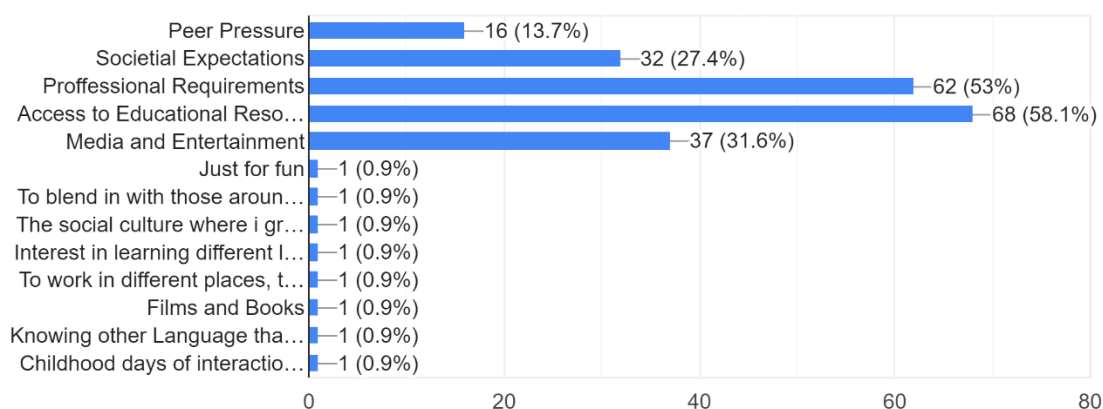
117 responses



Out of 117 participants, 68.4% learned their second language through schools, while 22.2% learned from their family and friends. There are others who learned from the media, work/professional environment and home which are 7.7%, 1.7%, 0.9% respectively.

17. What social factors influenced your learning of a second language in India?

117 responses

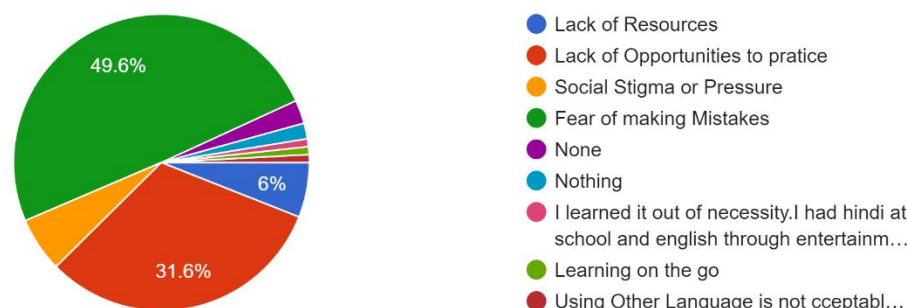


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The main social factor which influenced second language learning is access to education (58.1%), professional expectations where 53% societal expectation (27.4%), media and entertainment (31.6%) and others option have 0.9%.

18. What are the main challenges you faced while learning a second language in India?

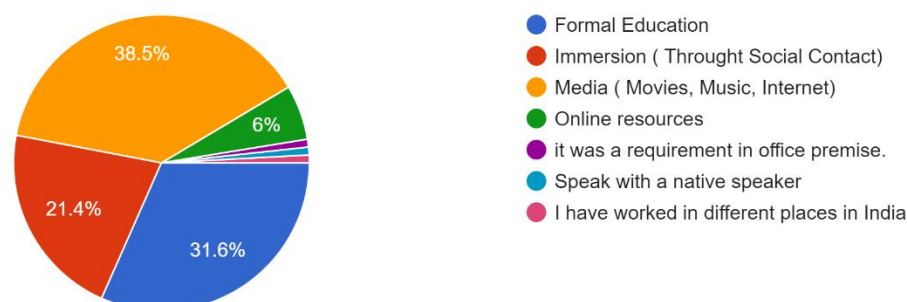
117 responses



The primary challenges faced by respondents while learning a second language in India include Fear of making mistakes (49.6%) and lack of opportunities to practice (31.6%). Additionally, 6% mentioned lack of resources, while others cited social stigma or other options.

20. What strategies or methods helped you the most in learning a second language?

117 responses



Out of 117 participants, the strategies or methods that helped in learning a second language is through media (38.5%). The other participant felt speaking to their native speakers and immersion (through social contact) as a way to improve them i.e., 31.6% and 21.4% respectively. Others had other ways which they inculcated to learn their second language.

3. Socio- Cognition in Language use

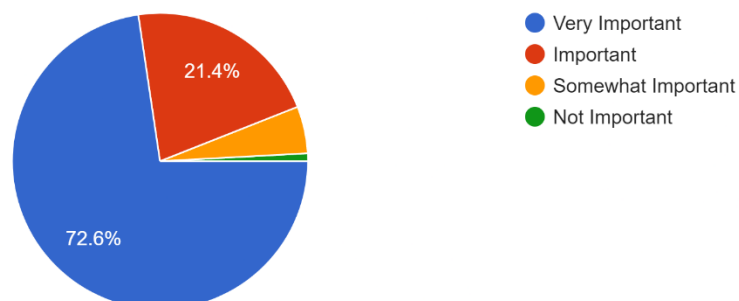
The term "socio-cognition" describes the cognitive processes that are shaped by social interactions and affect how people learn, utilize, and understand language. In multilingual and bilingual environments like India, socio-cognitive elements including social norms, peer pressure, and cultural identity are important determinants of language use. Studies reveal that bilinguals frequently exhibit cognitive flexibility and code-switching, which enhances problem-solving and multitasking abilities (Bialystok, 2009). Because people modify their language use according to the situation, the target audience, and cultural norms, these cognitive processes are entwined with social experiences (Khubchandani, 1997). It is

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essential to comprehend socio-cognition in order to investigate language use in a variety of contexts.

9. How would you describe the role of social interactions (family, friends, workplace) in learning a second language?

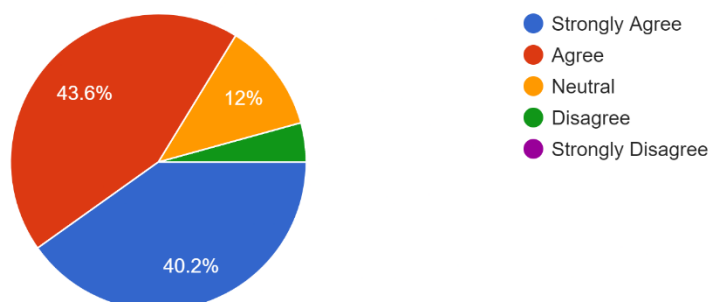
117 responses



Out of 117 participants, 72.6% found out that it is very important to have social interactions in learning the second language. Around 21.4% of the participants found it important to have social interaction. Rest of the participants felt somewhat important or not important of social interaction of language learning.

11. Does learning multiple languages enhance your ability to think critically or solve problems?

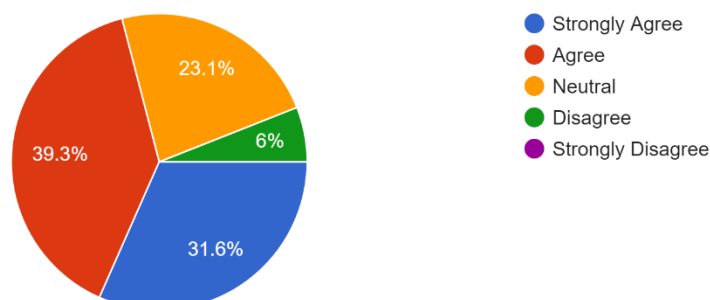
117 responses



Out of 117 participants, 43.6% felt that learning multiple language enhance the ability to think critically or solve problem. 40.2% of the participants strongly agree to the statement and 12% of the participant are neutral to the statement.

12. Have you experienced any cognitive advantages (like better memory or multitasking) because of being bilingual?

117 responses

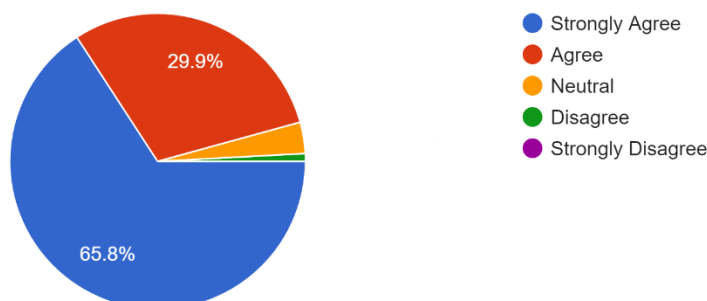


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Out of 117 participants 39.3% of the participants have agreed that they have experienced better cognitive advantages because they are bilingual. Around 31.6% strongly agree to the statement, 23.1% have a neutral stand and 6% has disagreed to the statement.

13. Do you feel that speaking multiple languages makes you more open to different cultures and perspectives?

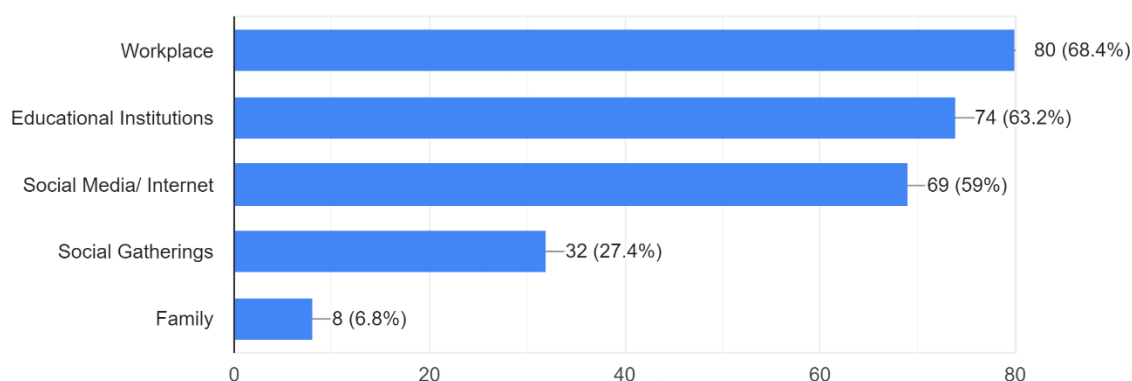
117 responses



Out of 117 participants 65.8% strongly agrees that speaking multiple language makes them open to different cultures and perspectives. Around 29.9% agree to the statement and others have neutral and disagree responses.

16. In which domains do you use English more than your native language? (Select all that apply)

117 responses



Out of 117 responses, 68.4% of the participants felt that English language be more used than native language in working sector. 63.2% have found that English language used in educational sectors. Social media and social gathering have 59% and 27.4% respectively. In families around 6.8% of the participants use English language than their native language.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Researches on socio- cognitive dynamics underlying language acquisition have been conducted amongst bilingual and multilingual Indian communities. The information thus collected from 117 participants enlightens the "linguistic complexity" characterizing how people cope with multiple languages. More attention is therefore accorded to participants' attitudes toward language use, cognitive processes associated with language acquisition, and how social variables influence those dynamics.

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Attitude towards the Language: Socio-Cognitive Interaction Patterns

As with most of the respondents whose language spoken at home is Malayalam, this adds up to 80.3%, followed by Tamil, Hindi, and other regional languages, the responses reveal a complex linguistic environment. This variety reflects that people switch between languages based on the situation and adds up to the multilingual background in India.

Respondents thus reported it frequently during social interaction often in tandem with local languages, to 42.7% and ranked it to be the most important contact language. This goes to reveal how important English has become for both private worlds and working worlds as a connector between communities of different languages.

From the findings related to code-switching, 47% of the subjects code-switch most of the time during conversations, and 23.9% code-switch often. This implies that most of the time in India, bilinguals actually switch between the two or more languages for different social situations that enhances their ability to perform in multilingual environments. The frequency of code-switching represents the flexible use of language by bilinguals, a fact supported by theories about cognitive flexibility (Bialystok, 2009).

Linguistic views indicate another interesting subset of respondents where 93.2% hold the view that English is either very important or essential. This represents the cultural importance of regional languages as well as accepting English as a means of social and economic mobility. This mixed feeling signifies both the learning of English for career advancement and the native tongue for identity formation.

The socio-cognition of language acquisition

The second language learning experiences of the participants comprised the data for the socioeconomic aspects of language development. The information obtained indicates that 42.7% started learning another language during primary school, although most participants, 45.3%, initiated their second language study when still young. Second language learning often happened in school, as 68.4% respondents indicated that they had learned their second language in school; it was the most common mode of learning. Other significant influences included friends, family members, and the media.

Among the challenges noted, students reported inadequate opportunity to practice chances with 31.6% and fear of mistakes with 49.6%. These results support socio-cognitive theories, which predict that social contexts and available resources influence cognitive functioning and affect language learning.

Socio-cognitive model of learning language

Socio-cognitive dynamics in language use entail altering language use according to the social contexts. From observation, 72.6% of respondents considered that social interaction is required to assist people to acquire the language of interest; these respondents support Vygotsky's theory concerning social mediation in cognitive development. Also, 43.6% of the participants attested that the acquisition of more than one language improves one's ability to think critically and problem-solve, while 39.3% indicated that the bilingual brain is more cognitively advance because it has better memory and the ability to multitask. Besides, respondents of whom 65.8% strongly agreed averred that the benefit of multilingualism was tolerance of many cultures and opinions. This goes to help support the theory that

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bilingualism helps make individuals become socially adaptive to the various cultures and brings along cognitive benefits as well.

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, this research underlines the crucial influence that socio-cognitive dynamics play in language attitudes, learning, and usage in bilingual and multilingual contexts in India, with English as a key contact language and bilingualism as fertile ground for cognitive flexibility and social adaptability. Obviously, such treatment lends advantages to bilingual problem-solving and cultural awareness. As such, these findings call for policies and curricula to be designed sensitively and more inclusively of the benefits in bilingualism in a multilingual country like India.

Limitation

- 1. Sample Size and Diversity:** Although this study used 117 participants, such a sample size may not very well represent the larger Indian population, for instance, considering the linguistic diversities and Indian vastness. In this case, since 80.3% of participants are Malayalam speakers, such a pool of participants might have biased toward specific regional languages, thus disregarding contributions of linguistic experience and national representations from other linguistic backgrounds or regions.
- 2. Self-reported information:** Perhaps the answers from the respondents were biased because they might have been answering based on their socially desirable answers rather than what they really feel or do when it comes to language and its attitude. This therefore leads to biased results-primarily in terms of items about language attitude and perceived difficulty in learning a foreign language.
- 3. Narrow scope of Socio-cognitive factors:** In this scenario, socio-cognitive dynamics would encompass considerations of aspects such as attitudes toward a language and how the learning process goes on in the cognitive domain concerning a second language. In that process, economic status, educational background, and access to resources and facilities are some very important factors that might have not been put into consideration.
- 4. Contextual Factors:** The findings reported here are not based on the dynamic nature of language use and attitude change over time or between situations. The attitudes to language shift with the changing social context and perceptions; a study cannot be representative of the general opinions.
- 5. Methodological Limitations:** Further narrowing the depth of insight on the participants' experience with regard to language acquisition are data gathering methods like a questionnaire or interview. Qualitative methods would have been helpful in providing more depth in individual storytelling, perhaps underutilized.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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