



Multilingualism: Opportunities and Challenges among the Indigenous Cultural Communities

Rene M. Bonifacio
China Mae S. Caliba
Zhaira May Dag-on
Mhytus Antonette R. Gregorio
Reina Mae M. Hernandez
ABELS 2B

Department of Language and Literature
College of Arts and Sciences
ELS 58 (Technical Writing in the Professions)

ABSTRACT

The world is culturally diverse with over 370 million indigenous people hence, multilingualism has had a huge impact on these indigenous cultural communities. Generally, this study aims to analyze some of the opportunities and difficulties brought by multilingualism among the indigenous cultural communities around the world. A descriptive research design was utilized in this Extended Literature Review. It has been stressed that being multilingual is an advantage in today's global society. Thus, Multilingualism has brought numerous benefits and challenges to indigenous cultural communities.

Keywords: *challenges, cultural communities, indigenous people, language learning, multilingualism, opportunities.*

INTRODUCTION

As the world is getting more diverse, being multilingual is almost normal, hence, its problems come in. Specifically, the time and effort it takes to learn a new language, particularly when developed later in life; a multilingual may have a smaller active vocabulary in each of their languages than monolinguals; and the influence of their other languages may seep through when a multilingual speak or write in one of their languages, and cause them to have an accent or make occasional grammatical errors (Pysarenko, 2017). The way and meaning of speaking is heavily influenced by the situation in which it occurs; who is interested, including their goals; and familiarity and understandings (Centre for Applied Linguistics, 2016). The majority of the time, these children have an idea in their heads but are unable to articulate it. This may be due to Word-Finding issues (Bator, 2016). Cenoz (2013) stressed that multilingualism is a complex phenomenon that can be studied from different perspectives in disciplines. As found by a number of studies on multilingualism, although it may involve various positive qualities, societal multilingualism can sometimes be fraught with various concerns. (Alshenqeeti, 2012).

There are 370 million Indigenous people around the world and spread across more than 90 countries. They belong to more than 5,000 different Indigenous peoples and speak more than 4,000 languages. Indigenous people represent about 5% of the world's population. The vast majority of them – 70% – live in Asia (Amnesty International, 2021).

More than 7000 languages are spoken today and in today's modern society, providing qualities of education for this generation is needed for all people who want to have bearable growth in this globally competitive environment. Irina Borkova, the UNESCO Director-General said that" Multilingualism is a source of strength and opportunity for humanity that symbolizes our

cultural diversity and motivates trade of views, critical thinking, and the widening of our ability to comprehend more. (UNESCO, 2014) stimulates countries to acquire mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual methods in education where relevant, and indispensable tools for good quality in education is a must. (UNESCO, 2008) stressed that 'multilingual education comprises at least three languages in education. The mother tongue, a regional/national language, and a multinational language, and for them to be able to acquire another language they must have to master their native language. However, In a classroom setup, we are allowed to speak our native language but during class hours the English language is being applied by the Government, and most private schools use the English language as their first language. Because there are numerous definitions of multilingualism, it can be difficult to formulate specific advantages and disadvantages to process. Many people are born into situations where they must learn multiple languages in their youth because that is the only way to work in society successfully. Some are born into monolingualism and must begin to learn at a later age and some people can flip through in another language, but then struggle to speak in it.

Multilingualism helps in national unity especially if people learn national languages besides their indigenous languages and lingua franca. In the process, the people concerned will automatically embrace the value of togetherness. Multilingualism provides an insight into the understanding of different cultures and experiences hence a multilingualism becomes multicultural in nature. Since languages don't operate in a vacuum, culture and society play a key role in its existence (Barasa, 2005). However, it has been realised in both the written and verbal communicative practices that proficiency in one language usually tends to dominate in a multilingual set up as compared to the others. Multilingualism can also be regarded as the co-existence of several languages within a society. These several languages can be official or unofficial, native or foreign and national or international (Lyons, 1981). Depending on the composition of the society, multilingualism practice in education should embrace the indigenous, national, official and foreign languages as equal partners in the language policy development and education (Okal, 2014).

Since languages don't reside in a void, society and culture play a key role in its life. This is because language is sociolinguistic, an ethnic and religious linguistic and a personality psychology issue (Barasa, 2005). Internal and external validity are also challenged by the researcher's personal relation to the chosen subject and his or her experience with the topic. The greatest challenge is researcher bias, which arises "when the researcher has personal prejudices or a priori assumptions that he/she is unable to bracket" or distinguish from what is being studied (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009)

One of the recent improvements in Basic Education Curriculum brought on by the new K-12 program in the Philippines is the implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) explicitly in Kindergarten, Grades 1, 2, and 3 to help the aim of "Every Child-A-Reader and A-Writer" by Grade 1." In Grades 1 and 2, mother tongue is taught as a separate Learning Area, and since its introduction three years ago, it has been accompanied by research justifying its importance in the Philippine educational system. Balce, M. (2005) performed one of these studies on the MTB-MLE implementation in the Philippines, proposing the use of the mother tongue (L1) as the language of learning and instruction (LOLI) for Science and Health at the elementary school level for two reasons: (1) Talking, classifying, inferring, forecasting, analyzing data, hypothesizing, describing operationally, and investigating are all linguistic skills. The mother tongue is the best way to improve and sharpen these skills. (2) Children in elementary school are also learning their native language. To grasp complex science concepts, they need time to concentrate and master their mother tongue fully.

Since such bilingual's native language differences from the monolingual's native language, it's easy to see how these changes in the native language might be interpreted as a negative effect of new language learning or, at the very least, as a sign of language attrition. However, that view fails to account for the variation that is normally seen among monolingual speakers themselves. Most Americans accept the idea that people living in the South will speak with a different accent than people living in the Northeast or Midwest. These regional differences in dialect among

monolingual speakers may in fact be related to the changes that are observed in the native language of bilingual or multilingual speakers: Not all monolinguals are the same, and recent studies have begun to identify the ways that monolingual speakers of the same native language may differ from one another (Pakulak & Neville, 2010).

The main goal of this study is to examine the benefits and drawbacks of multilingualism in the indigenous cultural communities. Specifically, the study is to determine the opportunities brought by multilingualism among indigenous cultural communities; then identify the challenges brought by multilingualism among indigenous cultural communities; and lastly evaluate the impact brought by multilingualism among indigenous cultural communities.

Additional information, in the review of the related literature section this portion of the paper is where the relevant studies related to the study will be provided and can be seen. Next, in the section of methodology three subheadings can be seen specifically, the descriptive research design, which tackles about the way or what path this research will be taking; the data gathering procedure, wherein explanation of what procedure is used to gather data is shown; the methods of analysis, in which explains how the data is being analyzed. Multilingualism has brought valuable impact on the indigenous cultural communities' lives. It brought tremendous benefits like being able to adapt, influence and understand other cultures. The presence of benefits also comes with the challenges. Multilingualism has brought challenges among the indigenous cultural communities' lives like struggling to express themselves in a language that is spoken by the majority, and feeling anxious because they are afraid of making mistakes.

OPPORTUNITIES BROUGHT BY MULTILINGUALISM

Multilingualism along with other advantages also provides the benefit of expressing oneself or one's feelings. In this regard, Harris (2006) explains that the emotions which are intense in nature are better expressed in the first language, and express swear words or emotions in other languages than native ones are used. Another study by Dewaele (2010) regarding Asian and Arab subjects shows that participants flee the swear situation through code-switching from their own language to English (as cited in Costa & Dewaele, 2012). This shows how the holders of multiple languages have multiple choices for the expression to be right and also have access to a wider range of emotions (Costa & Dewaele, 2012). Multilingualism is not just helpful for one's own self but also can be beneficial for others, most likely at the workplace. If at a workplace where you have to make contact with multiple clients there might be a good chance to utilize the multilingual skill. As for therapists or counselors, it is indeed a plus point to communicate in multiple languages so they can help patients by conversing in their native language and make them feel more connected rather than isolated but this can lead to the level of empathy where complicity can happen. This heightened empathy is the drawback of being multilingual whereas in this aspect monolinguals are at the advantageous end (Costa & Dewaele, 2012).

The statutory acceptance of multilingualism as a basic ingredient in the realisation of equity and the processes of democratisation and national integration, and the 11- language decision is thus a bold (and possibly unique) initiative to address the manifold challenges of a complexly multilingual and culturally diverse country. The South African Government's acceptance of the multilingual and culturally heterogeneous character of South Africa did not, of course, stop with the acceptance of a number of constitutional stipulations. Their commitment to realizing their political philosophy is also expressed in additional, supportive institutions prescribed by the Constitution (such as the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities) and the further language planning decisions they took (Webb, 1999). Transient communities may be said to have three prototypical properties. They are emergent—in

the process of becoming—which is the reason why shared semiotic resources, sociocultural practices, and norms cannot be assumed to be in place. Of course, norms and practices do not emerge from nowhere, and no social situation can ever be completely normal free.

Attention only to Traditional Indigenous languages overlooks the great range of new languages spoken by many Indigenous children and their communities. Contact languages in Australia, varieties of the Aboriginal English, creoles and mixed languages such as Light Warlpiri, are rarely counted as languages or part of a multilingual repertoire and they are rarely recognized in education. Yet, they are the first languages many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children learn, and are the language of daily communication and expressions of individual and local identity across Australia. Recognizing the importance of home languages, Denise Angelo and colleagues from the Language Perspectives team, Education Queensland have designed and advocated a 'three-way strong' model, to promote children's strong mastery of traditional languages, contact languages and English in schools (Angelo & Carter, 2015).

Multilingualism practices enhance intellectual flexibility and creativity. Recent studies have indicated that children who grow up in a supportive environment speaking more than one language from an early age are more perceptive and intellectually flexible than those who speak one language (Okal, 2014).

The one drawback of speaking multiple languages is having a hard time figuring out how to express yourself: you spend more time thinking about the best sentence construction, which word fits best in the context, going through all synonyms in your head, and if you can't think of a better word, looking it up in the dictionary if it's available right now. Knowing multiple languages, but on the other hand, gives you greater advantages, such as being able to receive data more faster than the average person.

Bilinguals may be able to adjust to the increasing demands by improving their ability to suppress irrelevant information (Luce & Pisoni, 1998). Bilinguals are regarded to have better cognitive control throughout their lives than monolinguals (Bialystok, 1999, 2007; Bialystok, Craik,

Klein, & Viswanathan, 2004; Costa, Hernández, & Sebastián-Gallés, 2008). Bilinguals may thus be better suited to deal with native-language interruption during novel-language processing, making novel-language terms more accessible.

Researchers have portrayed bilinguals as mental jugglers who can hold both languages in the air while also being able to employ the intended language without making evident errors (Kroll, Dussias, Bogulski, & Valdes-Kroff, 2012). Recent research has backed up the premise that being able to juggle multiple languages has broader implications for bilinguals and multilinguals, such as improving their capacity to disregard unnecessary information, transfer from one task to another, and settle dispute among multiple options (Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2012).

The fact that a second or third language has the same basic cognitive and neurological machinery as the first has ramifications for language. The native language is affected by the interactivity of the networks that support all of the known languages. A bilingual or multilingual speaker's native language differs from a monolingual speaker's native language, indicating the effect of the second or third language on the first. The fact that these bidirectional effects can be demonstrated at every level of language use, from how speech is seen and spoken to how grammar is processed and how one chooses words to represent perceptual experience, is amazing (Ameel, Storms, Malt, & Sloman, 2005; Dussias & Sagarra, 2007). Even more startling, and in line with statements regarding the plasticity of life experience, changes in the native language have been noticed in second language learners from the very beginning of their new learning (Bice & Kroll, 2015; Chang, 2013). Because the bilingual's native language differs from the monolingual's native language, it's simple to understand how these changes in the original language could be viewed as a negative result of new language learning or, at the least, as a sign of language attrition. Regional dialect differences among monolingual speakers may in reality be linked to changes in the native language of bilingual or multilingual speakers: Not all monolinguals are the same, and new research has begun to highlight the differences between monolingual speakers of the same native language (Pakulak & Neville, 2010).

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Despite living on an island which boasts of its multilingualism, most Mauritian children spend the first few years of their lives in monolingual Kreol-speaking families where Kreol is the dominant language of the home and the environment. School is a major site where they are exposed to multilingualism – through the subjects taught (English, French and an optional ancestral language – one of the languages spoken or believed to have been spoken by migrants who came to Mauritius such as Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Hakka, etc.), the written medium of instruction (English) and the oral media of communication (French and Kreol). In the context of this shift from home monolingualism to school-mediated multilingualism, one of the important language and literacy challenges that most children face is that they have to learn English and through English, given that English is the main language of literacy and the main written medium of instruction throughout the education system from the first year of primary schooling. Acting as the linguistic bridge between the home and the primary school, the pre-school is the first semi-formal institution where children are introduced to and exposed to English and multilingualism (Auleear Owodally, 2010).

CHALLENGES BROUGHT BY MULTILINGUALISM

Multilingualism is a very intricate and complex paradigm. Its delineation is entrenched in varied hypothetical and concrete approaches which highlights altered features of practicing and knowing languages (Mahmoudi & Hassan, 2019). Multilingualism is acquired through a number of factors, through methods such as at-home education and national education policies. It has always been a field of interest of researchers (Weinreich, 1953; Vildomec, 1963), and even more so in recent years, given its importance in our globalized world today (Weinreich, 1953; Vildomec, 1963 as cited in Mah, 2016).

Because of a variety of reasons, some indigenous learners have difficulty speaking English and do not demonstrate a desire to communicate. This need to communicate is a requirement for overcoming English language barriers (Morozova, 2013). For example, the general problems of the Russian students in connection to learning to speak were subdivided into four major classes, according to a recent study conducted in Russia (Morozova, 2013). 1) Students are embarrassed to speak English because they are afraid of making mistakes and being chastised by teachers and others. 2) Students are encouraged to use their native language by working in communities. 3) Even in their native tongue, students lack information about the subjects being discussed. 4) Students seem to lack language command when it comes to completing assigned tasks.

Aside from academic issues, indigenous people face a variety of other challenges and experiences related to their struggle to express themselves in a language that is spoken by the majority. Their legitimate prospects are hindered by their insufficient exposure to the English language. Indigenous students, especially in Australia, face some valid process issues (Australian Law Reform Commission, 2016). Their difficulties with official procedures are exacerbated by their English language shortcomings and/or cultural barriers, which include their demeanor and poor comprehension. Other issues that greatly distress indigenous Australian learners during legal proceedings include obstructions to communication, a lack of comprehension, ostracism, and

agency complications, among others. They are overrepresented in such legal procedures, which has been linked to unfavorable outcomes.

The majority of the time, speaking is spontaneous, evolving, and adaptable. The way and meaning of speaking is heavily influenced by the situation in which it occurs; who is interested, including their goals; and familiarities and understandings (Centre for Applied Linguistics, 2016). The majority of the time, these children have an idea in their heads but are unable to articulate it. This may be due to Word-Finding issues (Bator, 2016), in which the infant believes the utterance is on the tip of his or her tongue, but the thoughts are unable to be expressed. The child may believe that she or he knows exactly what the word is, but when she or he says it, his or her thoughts cause it to come out incorrectly. It is extremely difficult for the indigenous learner to recall the exact name that communicates the concept in his or her mind (Coleman, 2014).

The impacts of colonization have placed enormous pressure on Indigenous people and their language practices. Oftentimes people have been forced to take up colonizer languages at the expense of their ancestral language and multilingual practices that encourage the use of both or all languages. Encouraging multilingualism is important for speakers and for the survival of languages. The greater the number of speakers, the stronger the language for the future. Speakers keep languages and culture alive, and speakers revive languages. For many Indigenous people, teaching and learning their heritage language(s) is especially valuable because of the deep connection people feel towards their language, its connection to cultural knowledge, land and kin, as well as expressions of contemporary identity. Having language and cultural knowledge is more than simply an intellectual achievement, but is part of a process of decolonization. All over the world, Indigenous communities are revitalizing languages at different stages of vitality, from languages with few records, to those with many speakers. Leanne Hinton has researched and advocated for language revitalization projects in the US. Her work and her many publications, and the work of many others have informed a global movement, which has helped many Australian reclamation and revitalization programs (McCarty, 2003).

Multilingualism, more specifically multilingual practices are seen as situated practices rather than as abstract and absolute competences a speaker acquires. The idea of a perfect mastering of two or more languages is dismissed in favour of concepts that acknowledge that multilingual competencies are organised around activities, situations and topics (Blommaert 2005). Similarly, practices such as language crossing (Rampton 1995), i.e. the appropriation of elements of other voices across language boundaries, that are not based on the knowledge of a language in a traditional sense but rather on language as an expression of style, are being increasingly perceived as multilingual practices and not as deficiencies, as traditional Indigenous language programs operate in a range of contexts, with different aims at different stages — revival, revitalisation and maintenance. Improving language proficiency at each stage, thus fostering multilingualism is a shared goal. In revival programs, the language is being re-learned by all speakers involved. Initially, the broad aim of such programs may be re-awakening the language and reconnecting the community with their heritage language and culture. The goal for students may be to develop communicative competence and knowledge of their heritage language, culture and history, and become part of a community of new speakers (O'Rourke & Pujolar, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Despite the impact of globalization among each individual in today's society, the Indigenous people are left behind. Right now, issues like large-scale development, denial of land rights and marginalization are reality for indigenous cultural communities across the globe. That is why we propose that multilingualism opportunities and challenges among the indigenous cultural communities must be studied.

By learning another language, you will undoubtedly meet new individuals and new companions. Having the option to talk more than one language is extraordinary and powerful, it's an incredible benefit and opportunity for an individual who knows more than dialects. As we are surrounded by innovation, it is quite clear that learning another language can be useful from

numerous points of view, for example in applying for a job, working abroad, visiting another country, etc. Moreover, multilingual people are additionally more capable than monolinguals to see things from a numerous social point of view, bringing about the development of multiculturalism. This is a major and enhancing advantage in a world without lines, and it is particularly vital with regards to grasping various societies and people both inside and outside our own country.

Newland (2013) stressed that being multilingual is a valuable advantage in today's global society, which is right at everyone's doorstep. True, it has its problems too, like how people face a variety of other challenges and experiences related to their struggle to express themselves in a language that is spoken by the majority (Australian Law Reform Commission, 2016). Now, aside from societal problems it also affects the academic side, for example, the problems of the Russian students in connection to learning to speak another language, states the recent study conducted in Russia. Specifically, students are embarrassed to speak English because they are afraid of making mistakes; students are encouraged to use their native language by working in communities; students lack information about the subjects being discussed and; students seem to lack language command when it comes to completing assigned tasks (Morozova, 2013). Making it extremely difficult for the indigenous learner to recall the exact name that communicates the concept in his or her mind (Coleman, 2014).

Being multilingual will allow natives to switch from one language's functionality techniques to the other as needed, which will make it easier for them to find work and give them more confidence when interacting with others than those who just speak their native language. Being multilingual can be viewed as a type of human capital too, because it allows one to earn a higher salary and achieve a desirable job position in any influential society. Multilinguals are not limited to a single point of view, but they have a deeper knowledge of the possibility of alternative perspectives. Indeed, one of the most important educational benefits of language instruction has always been this. In terms of linguistic awareness, communication ability, and competences, it's undeniable that the benefits of being a multilingual speaker extend to other aspects of life, in

addition to the communicative resourcefulness and creativity advantage they have over monolinguals.

By all accounts, and with proven results, multilingualism has greatly affected the lives of indigenous. Hence, there are a number of gaps in our knowledge around Multilingualism among the Indigenous Cultural Communities. Therefore, in-depth study about the impact of Multilingualism among the Indigenous Cultural Communities would benefit from further research. It would also be helpful to assess these impacts for the benefit of the Indigenous Cultural Communities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We are grateful because we managed to complete our Technical Writing in the Professions assignment within the time given by our professor Mr. Rene Bonifacio. This research cannot be completed without the effort and cooperation from our group members, China Mae Caliba, Jeremy DuhayLungsod, Zhaira May Dag-on, Mhytus Antonette Gregorio, and Reina Mae Hernandez. We sincerely thank our professor of Technical Writing in the Professions ELS 58, Mr. Rene Bonifacio for the guidance and encouragement in finishing this research and for teaching us in this course.

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