

**MULTILINGUALISM IN EARLY CHILDHOOD:  
INVESTIGATING HOW EXPOSURE TO THREE LANGUAGES  
FROM INFANCY SHAPES CHILDRENS' SPEAKING SKILLS IN  
SIALKOT**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Multilingualism in early childhood has become a developing area in research due to its potential effects on the speaking skills of children. This research explores impact of early exposure to the three languages - Punjabi, Urdu and English - on the speaking skills of young children in the Sialkot. As more children in the different communities of Pakistan grow up with various languages, the aim of this research to understand how exposure to these three languages shapes vocabulary, pronunciation and communication flexibility. A quantitative research design was used, with data collected through structured questionnaires from 25 parents and 25 teachers of multilingual children. The data analyzed using SPSS software. Analyzed data shows that multilingual children have wide range of vocabulary than monolinguals and they have more confidence to communicate with their audiences according to the context. Further, results shows that early multilingual have some issue with code-mixing and language switching but its is not permanent, and they have more verbal expressions and communicative abilities. Most of teachers confidently supported the multilingual children and reported as multilinguals are more confident in group discussions than monolinguals. The research concludes that early multilingualism has positive impact on the development of speaking skills, multilinguals are more fluent, have broader range of vocabulary and better pronunciation than monolinguals. Furthermore, multilinguals can switch their languages according to the audience which leads to the adaptability in communication. At last, this research recommends that parents, teachers and education planners should support the use of more than one language in early childhood environments and education.*

**Keywords:** *language exposure, language switching, Multilingualism, pronunciation, quantitative research, speaking skills, vocabulary*

**Introduction**

The impact of multilingualism in early childhood has become more common due to globalization and multilingual setting where the multiple languages, dialects or language varieties coexist and use by the different groups and communities. Pakistan has multilingual societies, so, this study is specifically in the context of Sialkot where the different communities or groups use different languages such as Punjabi, Urdu and English. So that, the children who grow up with these three specific languages have more chance to learn the more languages to enhance the speaking skills. The study about how learning multiple languages from early ages influence the speaking skills of children and how the use of multiple languages enhance the proficiency in

communication. Furthermore, the children who expose different languages from their infancy they face multiple challenges but within the passage of time they overcome the challenges by learning vocabulary, grammar rules and pronunciation. Multilingualism is process and learning different languages by their parents in multiple meaningful ways( Kirsch & Aleksic, 2021).

According to the Fan et al. (2016) found that 3 to 8 years old children who had been exposed to multiple languages communicate better than monolingual infants in everyday communication task. The study aims to investigate the impact of growing up with trilingual environment by focusing on children who are 3 to 8 years old in the Sialkot, Pakistan, where multilingualism is common phenomena and acquire languages Punjabi as mother language, Urdu as national language and English use as the official language in the societies of Pakistan.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century , the common perception in linguistics was that the multilingualism might be has negative effect on language development in children. As Ronjat (1913) said that multiple languages could confuse the children in speech delay development and cause difficulties in different language perception as well. So, children would struggle with language acquisition.

However, as Siegal et al. (2010) said that learning more than one language actually enhance the childrens' ability to understand the hidden meaning and indirect speech acts. That's why, the multilingualism does not confuse the children and they communicate better than the children with one language. Moreover, the study by the Ahsan et al.(2024) investigate how growing up with three languages (Punjabi, Urdu and English) affects the children's language development. The study found that multilingualism if has benefits then it also has challenges in code switching and fluency in conversation from infancy.

However, as children who acquire three languages at the same time from early ages face challenges as well when they communicate in everyday situation such a speech delays and code mixing in which the grammatical structure influence the other one. This exposure to the three languages also have exposure with different phonetics and grammatical structure by which they enhance their understanding and adapt to new linguistics patterns and use these in different context.

In Sialkot, Pakistan, many children are exposed to three languages from birth as Urdu, English and Punjabi which are the part of their social and educational environments. Urdu is the national language, English is the primary language for education and business, and Punjabi is widely spoken at home and in local communities. This creates a rich multilingual setting, providing an opportunity to study how trilingual exposure shapes early childhood language development.

According to Shafiq & Saeed (2017) when children have a strong foundation of the mother tongue and different language in schooling helps them make better connection with others, cultural identity and confidence. So, more than one language helps children to understand new ideas by keeping their mother tongue as first language and learning other one from their school.

Children who grow up in homes where three languages are spoken often speak more confident, know more words and can change how they talk depending on who they are speaking to this is because they hear and use different languages and parents also help by using different languages with them (Hosseini & Haukas, 2021).

In cities like Sialkot, many children speak Urdu, English and Punjabi. Parents help them learn all three by using the different languages at home and teachers use these languages

as well for children to understand the context. But if one language is used much more than one language might be effect the other languages and they face difficulty to perform well in multiple languages.

Moreover, children learn English, Urdu and Punjabi accents from their environment. If they have Punjabi environment their learner strong accent of Punjabi and perform well in it. Similarly, those children who watch English cartoons from their infancy age they have strong accent and vocabulary in it. that's why multiple languages play specific role in early ages.

The findings are particularly relevant for the multilingual communities like Sialkot ,where different languages are uses in one environment and all these language have different phonological and grammatical system with are helpful for the multilinguals to understand the every context easily and communicate with other in fluency by using these languages.

The main objectives of this study is to examine how early exposure to three languages influences the development of children speaking skills. To analyze the differences in fluency,pronunciation and vocabulary between multilingual and monolingual and to investigate the effects of multilingualism on language-switching ability and communication flexibility in young children .

**Research questions:**

1. How does learning three or more languages in early childhood affect children's speaking skills?
2. In what ways do multilingual children differ from monolingual children in fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary development?
3. How does multilingualism influence children's ability to switch between languages while speaking?

As multilingualism becomes more common in early childhood, many children grow up learning three or more languages simultaneously. While previous research has extensively explored the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, there is limited understanding of how higher-order multilingualism specifically impacts on speaking skills. Questions remain about whether multilingual children develop stronger verbal abilities, such as pronunciation, fluency, and conversational flexibility, or if they face challenges like speech delays, language interference, or code-switching difficulties.

This study seeks to investigate how growing up with three or more languages shapes children's speaking skills, examining both the benefits and challenges faced during the use of multiple language to understand the context and communicate in better way. The findings will help educators, parents, and language experts develop better ways to enhance multilingual children's language development and communication abilities. The significance of this research is to explore how learning three languages from a young age affects a child's ability to speak fro early ages. The study tells about the growing up with multiple languages can help children become better at understanding the context in which kind of language will be used . Moreover, make children more proficient and flexible in conversation with others. Multilingual could be change their language according to their audience.

The research is limited to children aged 3 to 8 years, as this is a critical period for cognitive and language development. Older children and adults are not included. The study only considers children learning three languages simultaneously from early childhood. Those languages which learned in later years are excluded.

### Literature Review

Multilingualism refers to the ability to use more than one language in different contexts by understating the multiple languages, this phenomena is not only important for the communication with other but helps to enhance the speaking skills in the social context. In early childhood, exposure to the multiple languages is not phenomena of languages but also help with thinking and social skills. Researches show that children who grow up hearing and speaking multiple languages from an early ages, they become better at problem solving and paying attention to understand how languages works compared to the children who speak only one languages from their early ages (Zheng et al., 2023). Research by the McLeod et al. (2016) show that exposure to the multiple languages helps children remember the different informations better and think that information in different ways. It also support their learning in school as well as home and helps them get along well with others and manage their emotions in better way.

The early childhood multilingualism has been largely shaped by theories of languages acquisition, including different theoretical perspective like The Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967) suggest in his theory that early ages are special period for childhood when the brain is the best at learning and they might learn round about 7 languages. Similarly, the The Bilingual Advantages theory from the research of Bialystok (2001) tells about the impact of the multilingualism on early childhood and cognitive aspect in which he said that the brain of young children are more stable than teenagers because at that time they can learn moos the critical thing and the bran is the flexible so they are able to learn more vocabulary to enhance their speaking skills to communicate in different situations without any speech delays. They can switch between different languages and remembering things for long time. **Language development in Sialkot:**

Sialkot, a city of Pakistans' Punjab province, is a linguistically rich environment where multiple languages like Urdu, English and Punjabi uses actively in educational, domestic, and in social setting as well. This mix of different languages in the community can help early child grow smarter and learn languages easily by using multiple languages but it is important that the schools use these languages in right for the enhancing the ability of speaking skills in more than one context (Ahsan et al., 2023).

Vygotskys' Sociocultural theory (1978) suggested that children learn languages form their environment like society and culture. Every society and culture have different accents and dialects that's why the children from their early ages learn more language from their surroundings to understand the all three languages easily and communicate fluently. This helps them to enhance the speaking skills by learning different variety of vocabulary from the people around them.

On the other hand the other researcher also mention the challenges that faced by the children who speak multiple languages from their early ages. Sweller (1988) give the theory of Cognitive Load Theory in which he said that learning multiple languages from infancy at once might be out extra pressure on the childs' brain. This could make difficult for them to learn and use languages fluently, it might create the challenges like delays in speaking.

Research shows that learning more than one languages from young age does not cause delays in how children learn to speak. Rather than it actually helps their brain grow and become better at thinking solving problem in best way. According to the Meisel (2011), when children are exposed to the multiple languages they do not mix the Monolingual

had to know the total vocabulary of the single language and multilingual had to know fewer words from each language. But when the researcher adds up the all vocabulary of multilingual children they had to know the amount of the words of multilingual were large numbers than monolingual (Hoff et al., 2012).

On the other hand, some researchers like De Houwer (2009) said that children who grow up with multiple languages might speak fewer words at first. But it is temporary not permanent because when they reach five years they learn different vocabulary from each language which enhance the communication skills.

Furthermore, the challenges that faced by the multilingual like code switching but the same thing explained by the Genesee (2003) that code switching is not a challenge or mistake instead of it is the starting point of the learning multiple languages. As in the context of Sialkot, where three languages are commonly used to communicate and the early learners use these languages by according to the people who they talking to. A research by the Byers-Heinlein and Werker (2009) found that early child who exposed to hearing more than one language can tell the difference between sounds from different languages earlier than children who hear only one language. This means that hearing multiple languages from birth helps children become ore aware of sounds in speech and can improve their speaking and language skills as they grow older. So, those children can differentiate the sounds of the different language because every language has different accent and dialect.

Zheng et al., (2021) found in their research that children who speak multiple languages become better at listening to their own speech and fixing mistakes. Because they use different languages every day and learn different vocabulary from each language to perform better in communication and enhancing speaking skills by learning more and more languages. Such a child who speak different languages like Urdu, English and Punjabi at school and at home as well may realize that the some sounds in Urdu do not exist in English language due to the different grammatical structure of both languages. Oktaviani et al., (2022) talks about how the children learn from their environment and the impact of this on the speaking skills of children based on the context. Learn to speak and understand languages between the ages of 3 to 8 years and said that when kids hear lots of talking, play with with other who speak different languages and get attention from parents and caregiver, they learn to speak and listen better than who hear only one languages from their surrounding who use only one language

Andleeb, Asghar and Zimi (2023) looked at how speaking multiple languages can help thinking in multiple ways. Children who speak more than one language did better in solving the problem and proved in their research by giving different task that multilingual can solve the problem easily than who speak only one language. So, it proved that learning multiple languages at once polish the skills of young children from early ages.

One of the latest research about the learning multiple languages in which they compare the monolingual and multilingual children to check the non-verbal communication like gesture and facial expression in different languages but they suggest that multilingual children did not understand the things like indirect speech or body language. This study did not find any kind of advantages for the multilingual children over all, and they also suggest to work more in this area for more future research to understand the advantages and challenges faced by the multilingual (Wonderen, Mulder, Rispens, & Verhagen, 2023).

The gap remaining after all these studies the researcher only conduct data from experimental method but in this research data will collect from the surveys and

observation in which the population will be the parents and teacher and the other one is directly focus on the challenges which faced by the multilingual children in early age at the school level and real-life speaking challenges multilingual face in social and professional settings in the context of the Sialkot, where different languages are used from the early age and their exposure to these languages from their environment.

Many current studies use simple observation methods, but using different research approaches, like experiments, could give a better understanding of how learning multiple languages affects children's speaking skills. While there is already a lot of research on multilingualism, more studies are needed to specifically explore how children in Sialkot develop their speaking skills in a multilingual environment.

### **Research Methodology**

To explore the impact of multiple languages on early childhood speaking skills this study adopts the quantitative research methodology. In quantitative methodology involve the structured and standardized questionnaires separately designed for both teachers and parents of multilingual. The design of this study is descriptive in nature which focused on the accurate representation of the phenomena under investigation. The study describe the pattern in language use, speech development and communication skills among children who exposed to three languages from their early ages.

The target population of this study includes parents and teachers of multilingual which represents the both domestic and professional aspects of life which enhance the speaking skills in both areas. There are 25 parents from different communities and 25 teachers from different schools in the Sialkot.

Sample is selected by using the purposive sampling due to limited resources such as time, accessibility and purpose of this study. Participants are selected from various locals schools and parents form the different communities in the context of Sialkot who have the multilingual children. The parents in this study are selected to provide the insights into their childrens' daily language use, speaking skills and fluency in communication and code switching in home. Teachers, on the other hand, offers professional perspectives on speaking skills, pronunciation accuracy languages development and classroom communication behavior.

The study on the impact of multiple languages exposure from the infancy that influence the speaking skill use primary data collection by making the structured questionnaires for both teachers in professional field and parents in daily life. The structured questionnaires allow the researchers to collect the standardized and quantifiable date which helps to make ideal research for quantitative description. Questionnaires were distributed in the paper format and were collected manually from both groups of participants as teachers and parents of multilingual children.

Furthermore, the questionnaires have close-ended questions with three sub-points which simplifies both answering process for researcher to analyse the data and for participant as well for understanding the nature of the study.

This research is based on the two theories which helps to understand the core idea of this research that how exposure to the multiple language from the early ages enhance the speaking skills to communicate in different context.

The one the main theory "Sociocultural theory" given by the Vygotsky in which he said that children learn language and develop it through the interaction with other people who have different languages. He believed that language is not for only means of communication but also help children to think and learn. In multilingual environments, children are exposed to the different diverse linguistic and cultural experiences which

enhance the speaking skills as well as critical thinking. Therefore, this theory supports the idea of multilingualism impact the children speaking skills in negative as well as positive areas, but these challenges are temporary which improve according to the age. In addition to the idea of Vygotsky, the researcher Jim Cummin's Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis proposes that the proficiency in one language can help to understand the others both languages. If the children prefer to speak one language over other they may be face challenges to speak other two languages. So this theory support the idea of multilingual environment can influence the speaking skills of children. After collecting the responses from both teacher of different schools and parents of multilingual children who hear three languages from their infancy show that if a child speak only one languages but hear all three languages leads to the challenges to understanding the context.

This study follows all the ethical guidelines to protect the rights, privacy and respect of the participants. At the starting of survey form there was a consent to get the agreement of each participant. All participant given a clear explanation of the research, what is was about, how it would be done, and how it might be helpful for researcher. Taking part in research was completely voluntary, and participants were told that they could refuse or stop at any time without any restriction if they wanted.

#### Data Analysis

The current research utilized quantitative research approach which was employed to collect the data and responses from participants. Descriptive frequency tests were used to obtain the results for the quantitative method analysis based on the impact of multilingualism on early children's speaking skills. For this analysis, 30 statements were used and all the tests were conducted SPSS software.

**Table 1:** *Statistics of Frequencies*

	Val id	N Missi ng	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
1.The age of your child?	25	0	2.24	2.00	2	.597
2.Which language is mostly used at home?	25	0	1.80	2.00	2	.408
3.How many languages did your child hear before age 4?	25	0	2.24	2.00	2	.723
4. How often is your child exposed to multiple languages?	25	0	2.36	3.00	3	.907
5. Has your child experienced any speech delays?	25	0	1.56	1.00	1	.768
6. How would you rate your child's pronunciation?	25	0	1.56	2.00	1	.583
7. Does your child mix languages while speaking?	25	0	1.84	2.00	1	.800

8. How fluent is your child in their dominant language?	25	0	2.52	3.00	3	.653
9. Does your child prefer speaking one language over others?	25	0	1.48	1.00	1	.823
10. How would you describe your child's vocabulary in the dominant language?	25	0	2.24	2.00	2	.723
11. What is the main language of teaching in school?	25	0	1.36	1.00	1	.490
12. How confident are you in supporting multilingual students?	25	0	1.24	1.00	1	.523
13. How fluent are multilingual students compared to monolingual peers?	25	0	2.36	3.00	3	.757
14. How is their pronunciation in the language of instruction?	25	0	1.48	1.00	1	.510
15. How often do they codeswitch during class discussions?	25	0	1.88	2.00	2	.526
16. Are multilingual students flexible in language use based on audience?	25	0	1.16	1.00	1	.473
17. Does multilingualism improve student participation in class?	25	0	1.16	1.00	1	.473
18. Do multilingual students show better problem-solving in verbal tasks?	25	0	1.96	2.00	1	.978
19. Do they interact more with peers from different language backgrounds?	25	0	2.04	2.00	3	.978
20. Are multilingual students more creative in verbal expression?	25	0	1.24	1.00	1	.523

This table shows the statistics of the frequency tests, and in this table the valid number of participants range is 50, consisting of 25 teachers from different schools and 25 parents of multilingual children. Now, the highest standard deviation value is .907 and lowest standard deviation value is .408. The lowest mean value is .116 and the highest mean value is 2.52 .

**Table 2:** *The age of your child?*

Statement 1		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3 to 4 Years	2	8.0	8.0	8.0
	5 to 6 Years	15	60.0	60.0	68.0
	7 to 8 Years	8	32.0	32.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

The majority of children aged 5 to 6 years (60%), 32% are aged 7 to 8 years and the least proportion aged 3 to 4 years, is (8%) groups. These samples were taken from the different areas of Sialkot, where the parents of multilingual children live.

**Table 3:** *Which language is mostly used at home?*

Statement 2		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Punjabi	5	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Urdu	20	80.0	80.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

This table from the parental questionnaire shows that 20% of the children use Punjabi, 80% children use Urdu at their home within the context of the Sialkot.

**Table 4:** *How many languages did your child hear before age 4?*

Statement 3		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	4	16.0	16.0	16.0
	2	11	44.0	44.0	60.0
	3	10	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

This table shows the percentage of those children who hear different languages from an early age on which 16% of the children hear only 1 language before age 4, 44% of the children hear 2 languages and 44% are those who hear all of the 3 languages from their infancy.

**5: Table**

*How often is your child exposed to multiple languages?*

Statement 4		Freque	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
ency					
Valid	rarely	7	28.0	28.0	28.0
	several time a week	2	8.0	8.0	36.0
	daily	16	64.0	64.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

In this table, there is a large amount (64%) of those children who exposed the multiple languages in daily life routine, while 8% exposed several times a week and 28% of the children rarely exposed more than one language.

**Figure 4:** *How often is your child exposed to multiple languages?*

This figure indicates that most of the children are exposed to all the three languages like Punjabi, Urdu and English in their daily lives, which helps them to enhance their vocabulary, pronunciation and confidence to communicate with the different audiences.

**Table 6:** *Has your child experienced any speech delays?*

Statement 5		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	15	60.0	60.0	60.0
	yes	6	24.0	24.0	84.0
	uncertain	4	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

This table shows that 60% of the children did not have any kind of difficulty in speaking, 24% of children have speech delays and another 16% also have speech delays while speaking but it depends on the situation as they uncertain speech delays.

Statement 6		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	good	12	48.0	48.0	48.0
	average	12	48.0	48.0	96.0
	poor	1	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

This table shows the pronunciation of the children in their main language, 48% of the parents rated their children pronunciation as good, 48% parents rated it as average and only 4% parents rated it as poor in their languages.

Statement 7		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	often	10	40.0	40.0	40.0
	sometimes	9	36.0	36.0	76.0
	average	6	24.0	24.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

According to this table, 40% parents said that their children often mix the languages while speaking, 36% parents said sometimes, and another 24% parents said average times are there while they mix multiple languages in communication.

9: *fluent is your child in their dominant language?*

Statement 8		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not fluent	2	8.0	8.0	8.0
	somewhat fluent	8	32.0	32.0	40.0
	fluent	15	60.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

This data shows the fluency of the multilingual children in their dominant language and its noted that only 8% of parents said their child is not fluent, 32% parents said somewhat fluent, and majority, of the parents 60% said their children have fluency in their dominant language.

**10:** *Does your child prefer speaking one language over others?*

<b>Statement 9</b>		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	18	72.0	72.0	72.0
	no	2	8.0	8.0	80.0
	depends	5	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

This table shows that the preference of that language, in this 72% of parents reporting that their children prefer one language over others, 20% said its depends on the situation and 8% said no preference.

**11:** *would you describe your child's vocabulary in the dominant language?*

<b>Statement 10</b>		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	small amount	4	16.0	16.0	16.0
	average	11	44.0	44.0	60.0
	rich	10	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

This table shows the range of vocabulary in the dominant language of early children in which the 44% of parents reported as average, 40% of parents as rich vocabulary and 16% of parents said small amount of vocabulary they have in their dominant language.

**12:** *What is the main language of teaching in school?*

<b>Statement 11</b>		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	English	16	64.0	64.0	64.0
	Urdu	9	36.0	36.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

This table shows the main language of teaching in the schools of Sialkot, 64% of the teachers reported that they have English language as the main or primary language in their schools while other 36% teachers reported as Urdu used as the main language.

According to this figure, majority of the schools are reported as where the English used as the main language. In this result, its is noted that when the children come from the homes where Urdu and Punjabi languages are used as the local languages face multiple challenges in English environment.

**13:** *confident are you in supporting multilingual students?*

Statement 12		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	very confident	20	80.0	80.0	80.0
	somewhat confident	4	16.0	16.0	96.0
	not confident	1	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total		25	100.0	100.0	

In this table, 80% teachers are very confident in the supporting multilingual students, 16% teachers are somewhat confident, and 4% of teachers are not confident.

**14:** *fluent are multilingual students compared to monolingual peers?*

Statement 13		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	less fluent	4	16.0	16.0	16.0
	equally fluent	8	32.0	32.0	48.0
	more fluent	13	52.0	52.0	100.0
Total		25	100.0	100.0	

This table shows the fluency of multilingual, 52% of the teachers from different schools reported that multilingual students are more fluent, 32% teachers said both groups are equally fluent and other small group 16% said monolingual are more fluent in their main language.

**15:** *is their pronunciation in the language of instruction?*

Statement 14		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	good	13	52.0	52.0	52.0
	average	12	48.0	48.0	100.0
Total		25	100.0	100.0	

This table shows that 53% of the teachers rated the pronunciation in the language of instruction as good while other 48% teachers rated it as the average in their language of instruction in educational setting.

16: *often do they code-switch during class discussions?*

Statement 15		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	rarely	5	20.0	20.0	20.0
	sometimes	18	72.0	72.0	92.0
	often	2	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

In this table, 72% of teachers reported that early children sometimes code-switch during class discussions, 20% rarely switch languages and other small group 8% as often change their language in class discussions.

17: *Are multilingual students flexible in language use based on audience?*

Statement 16		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	22	88.0	88.0	88.0
	no	2	8.0	8.0	96.0
	sometimes	1	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

This table shows that the flexibility of language, 88% teachers reported as yes, 8% teachers reported as no and 4% teachers reported as sometimes the children change their language depending on their audience.

**Figure 16:** *Are multilingual students flexible in language use based on audience?*

This figure indicates the results in which majority of the teachers said that their children have flexibility in their language for communication with other people and they have ability to change their language according to those audience who they are talking to.

18: *Does multilingualism improve student participation in class?*

Statement 17		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	22	88.0	88.0	88.0

no	2	8.0	8.0	96.0
neutral	1	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	25	100.0	100.0	

In this table, 88% of the teachers said that the multilingual students have ability to participate in class, 8% teachers said no, and other 4% teachers said as they are neutral in participating.

**19:** *Do multilingual students show better problem-solving in verbal tasks?*

Statement 18		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	12	48.0	48.0	48.0
	no	2	8.0	8.0	56.0
	sometimes	11	44.0	44.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

According to this data, 48% teachers reported as yes to show the better problemsolving in verbal tasks, 44% teachers reported as sometimes and other 8% as they have not ability to sole problem in verbal task.

**20:** *Are multilingual students more creative in verbal expression?*

Statement 19		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	20	80.0	80.0	80.0
	no	4	16.0	16.0	96.0
	sometimes	1	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

This table shows that 80% teachers agreed that the multilingual students are more creative in the verbal expression, while 16% teachers said no and 4% teachers agreed as sometimes.

**21:** *Do they require more language support than monolingual students?*

Statement 20		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	18	72.0	72.0	72.0
	no	2	8.0	8.0	80.0

similarly	5	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	25	100.0	100.0	

This table shows that the 72% of teachers said that multilingual students require more support, 8% of teachers said that monolingual require more support, and the other group of 20% said both require same support.

### Findings

This analysis reveals that early exposure to the multiple languages has a positive effect on the abilities and skills of children. Most of the children were introduced to more than two languages from their infancy and were regularly exposed to the them at their home and in their educational environment. Moreover, Urdu introduced was introduced as the dominant or main language in home while English used in the professional language as English emerged as official in Pakistan.

Furthermore, this change in the languages did not hinder children's language development. This linguistic diversity instead of challenges, enhances their skills of communication according their audience. Most of the parents reported that their children did not face any kind of speech delays in their main language, on the other hand, multilingualism helps to improve their speaking skills. From the perspectives of vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency multilinguals have more vocabulary than monolinguals. Teachers observed that multilingual students have more participation in the verbal expression and their could be change their language according to their audience without any speech delays. But some of the children still preferred the one language over other in which they were feel comfortable.

Many of the teachers had training in multilingual environments and they also supported multilingual children just because multilingual has positive effects and enhance the skills of communication and speaking. Overall, this analysis supports the ideas of positive aspects of the multilingualism which enhances the speaking skills, cognitive development, fluency, and vocabulary adjustment.

### Discussion

A review of various studies reveals that multilingualism improves speaking skills. Based on the literature and analysis of the responses of all 50 participants, shown that exposure to the multiple languages enhances the speaking and communication abilities. As most of the parents reported that their children were hear all three or minimum two languages from their early ages, this idea supported by the researcher Kirsch and Aleksic (2021), in which they said that multilingualism develops through the meaningful interaction with their parents, siblings and teachers as well. Lenneberg's (1967) Critical Period Hypothesis also discusses about the critical time period of language acquisition in early childhood. So, exposure to the three language enhances the skills of communication.

The responses of participants for the fluency and vocabulary of multilingual, children were generally fluent in their main language as the responses from parents the main language was the Urdu and some spoke Punjabi in their homes but they also have commands on all the three languages. As Meisel (2011) stated that early children can build different systems for each language and can speak with fluency without any delay. Moreover, the vocabulary of individuals language of multilingual children may have

smaller but if sum-up the vocabularies of each languages so their total size of vocabulary is often larger or comparable (Hoff et.al.,2012).

The analysis of responses of both participants indicates that the phonological awareness of the multilingual are more than monolingual. Because both participants, parents and teachers were largely rated as multilinguals were good or average in pronunciation (Antoniou et al.,2016). On the other hand, Zheng et al. (2021) further explains that notices in this research that multilingual children monitor and adapt pronunciation depending on the linguistic context and learn more these skills from their multilingual environment.

From this analysis there was minor cases where children faces some challenges of speech delays while learning different languages, but these challenges are temporary and develop in good communication with time to time, De Houwer (2009) and Genesee (2003). Then the assumptions by Ronjat (1913) who believed that multilingualism might be confused the early children and they feel uncomfortable while using the all three languages at a time. But latest findings indicates that multilingualism supports the communication competence over the time.

These results indicates that multilingual children have ability to understand the instructions from all the three languages Urdu, English and Punjabi, this aligns with the research by Siegal et al. (2001). There was also one important factor which notices that multilingual children interpret the meanings and switching of different language system as needed according to the context (Bialystok, 2001).

In the terms of vocabulary development multilingual children was reported as average to rich, particularly in their dominant language which supports the finding of the Hoff et al. (2012). Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) claimed that multilingual children's environment shaped by the family, teachers, peers and other community, which play a crucial role in speaking skills.

Another important side of these results training of the teachers play important role in the supports of multilinguals which show that most the teachers reported as they have training in multilingual settings, this corresponds with Ahsan et al. (2024). Moreover, this results showed that multilingual children feels more comfortable when communicate with peers from different backgrounds in which most of the children have different languages, that's why , children with more languages speak easily with audience they talk to.

Cognitive skills and problem-solving skills also enhanced by the learning different languages. Teachers noted that multilingual children express their ideas and thoughts in the class which leads to creativity. These findings supported by the Andleeb et al. (2003) which claimed that multilingual children can speak more openly and creatively. Finally, multilingual children showed many positive insights, the research also found that they required more language support in academic settings. Sweller's (1988) Cognitive Load Theory, which suggest that learning more languages at the same time can lead to the pressure on the children's mind. But, this finding suggest that multilingual children have more vocabulary and positive benefits were there in the early children.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored the impact of multilingualism on childhood from their infancy, specially three main languages, Urdu, English and Punjabi which are the main languages in the Sialkot of Pakistan. Moreover, the impact of these languages on the speaking skills of early children which play important role in the real life communication.

From the perspectives of both parents and teachers, the findings of this research confirm that multilingualism play significant role in the enhancing speaking skills, shaping children's fluency pronunciation, communication flexibility and verbal confidence. This research also tells about the difference between monolingual and multilingual as monolingual could not face the audience from different background while multilinguals were confident in this area.

As Critical Period Hypothesis and Sociocultural Theory talks about the sensitive time of language learning in early childhood, this result indicates that most of the children hear all three languages from their infancy. So, this research leads to the enhancing the development of speaking skills.

In short, from this research, multilingualism is not creating hinders in learning language, it enhance the speaking skills and development of communicative abilities. It plays significant role within acquiring languages in culturally and linguistically diverse communities like Sialkot.

### Recommendations

There are some highlighted recommendations for parents teachers and future researchers.

Parents should use all three main languages (Urdu, English and Punjabi) in their environment, which will be helpful for the fluency of children in both formal and informal settings. Support children's language blending and code-switching, because it is not mistake in language acquiring, it's the natural part of multilingual development. Teachers should use different professional programs, mainly focus on the multilingual environment which give strength to the confidence of both teachers and students. And establish the support services like speech workshops and different language development practices for students in which they will able to talk about their difficulties. For future researchers, conduct research as a longitudinal studies to check the longterm impact of multilingualism on children. Research about the different regions of Pakistan as a comparative research to the region of Sialkot.

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## APPENDIX

### A Parent Questionnaire

**Title:** Quantitative Insights on Multilingualism and Early Speaking Skills.

**Instructions:** Select the option that best represents your experience.

1. The age of your child?

- a. 3 to 4 years
- b. 5 to 6 years
- c. 8+ years

1. Which language is mostly used at home?

- a. Punjab
- b. Urdu
- c. English

3. How many languages did your child hear before age 4?

- a. 1
- b. 2
- c. 3

4. How often is your child exposed to multiple languages?

- a. Rarely
- b. several times a week
- c. Daily

5. Has your child experienced any speech delays?

- a. No
- b. Yes
- c. Uncertain

6. How would you rate your child's pronunciation?

- a. Good
- b. Average
- c. Poor

7. Does your child mix languages while speaking?

- a. Often
- b. Sometimes
- c. Average

8. How fluent is your child in their dominant language?

- a. Not fluent
- b. Somewhat fluent
- c. Fluent

9. Does your child prefer speaking one language over others?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Depends

10. How would you describe your child's vocabulary in the dominant language?

- a. Small amount
- b. Average
- c. Rich

### APPENDIX B Teacher Questionnaire

**Title:** Quantitative Assessment of Multilingualism and Student Speaking Proficiency

**Instructions:** Please select the option that best represents your experience or opinion.

1. What is the main language of teaching in school?
  - a. English
  - b. Urdu
  - c. Punjabi
2. How confident are you in supporting multilingual students?
  - a. Very confident
  - b. Somewhat confident
  - c. Not confident
3. How fluent are multilingual students compared to monolingual peers?
  - a. Less fluent
  - b. Equally fluent
  - c. More fluent
4. How is their pronunciation in the language of instruction?
  - a. Good
  - b. Average
  - c. Poor
5. How often do they code-switch during class discussions?
  - a. Rarely
  - b. Sometimes
  - c. Often
6. Are multilingual students flexible in language use based on audience?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Sometimes
7. Does multilingualism improve student participation in class?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Neutral
8. Do multilingual students show better problem-solving in verbal tasks?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Sometimes
9. Do they interact more with peers from different language backgrounds?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. sometimes
10. Are multilingual students more creative in verbal expression?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. some times