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Theoretical Review of The Iranian Case in Multilingualism

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Abstract

The country of Iran is made up of numerous distinct cultures and linguistic groups. According to Turkish, Kurdish, Baluchi, and Arabic speakers in Iran, their minority language is a significant part of their ethnic identity. The dominant Iranian population is bilingual. Persian is a language used for cultural and linguistic homogenization as well as for official purposes, but minority languages are not used in the education system. Complicated and puzzling for education authorities is the fact that there is an ongoing debate on the issue of bilingual education, and these programs are in place to assist students who speak a minority language. While it is difficult for Iranian educational institutions to balance different perspectives on English globalization, one of the obstacles they face is reconciling conflicting viewpoints on bilingual education. It's the lingua franca of international business, commercial aviation, and scientific research, and as such, most parents want their children to learn English. In contrast, Iran's comprehensive scientific plan predicts that Persian will become the world's primary scientific language in the not-too-distant future. Challenges, perspectives, and solutions in Iran's bilingual education were documented in this study. As seen from the results, resolving conflicts related to diversity, majority groups, and the presence of multiple languages will be an important challenge in the future. At the end of this manuscript, some solutions and proposals for finding a middle ground between bilingual education were presented.

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1. Introduction

Many experts believe that about two-thirds of the world's population is either bilingual or multilingual (Halsband, 2006; Ariyaningsih et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2021). While the increased diversity in our global community is increasingly apparent in schools and playgrounds, multilingualism and multiculturalism are societal facts of the 21st century, which can be seen across various settings. The term “bilingualism” has several usages. It signifies equivalent linguistic skills in two languages for certain people (Zuraida et al., 2020).

For others, it implies speaking two languages but with more advanced skills in one of them. Bilinguals who have always spoken two languages may actually be more dominant in one language than those who learned a second language after they had already spoken two. The phrase "bilingual" can cover several different types of people. Below the umbrella, you will find a diverse group of abilities that include varying degrees of fluency in two languages. Bilingualism is not only about being able to speak two languages fluently.

Ability exists without use of language. Despite a person's professional capability in two languages, that person may rarely or never utilize one of those languages. This person is bilingual, but he or she does not use that knowledge. The diversity of the population of Iran and the fact that the country is home to numerous different language communities all speaking different languages such as Turkish, Kurdish, and Arabic makes Iran a highly interesting place to visit. Most kids begin learning their first language at home and also go to school studying their lessons in Persian the entire time.

Over half of the kids in the school were members of a minority language or ethnicity, but the institution itself was strongly aligned with the mainstream language and culture. In this instance, it may be said that education's curriculum is based on Persian, the most widely spoken language. According to this data, it can be stated that this curriculum has had no influence on the non-Persian-speaking population, and may even have caused bilingualism in the home and school. Additive bilingualism is seen as a form of subtraction in Iran. In contrast to additive bilingualism, in which children are given the freedom to develop a certain language, they learn within a community where languages and cultures are valued. In this scenario, it is much more likely that the child will develop additive bilingualism, as she/he will then be adding another language and culture to her/his existing L1 and L2 repertoire.

Conversely, one disadvantage of subtractive bilingualism is that the child must give up learning the first language in order to acquire the second, and in this situation, the second language is learned at the price of the first. Being bilingual in Iran has no impact on cognitive development, according to García (2011), as all of the children come from subtractive bilingual programs which may have possibly buffered or had a beneficial impact on bilingualism. Oller & Pearson (2002) argue that as long as a person can become an efficient bilingual, they can profit from more favorable impacts, even if they just make it to the third floor (high level) of competence. The main goal of this work is to provide evidence that the problem needs to be addressed, and to look for a reasonable solution to it.

The inclusion of Iranian families with two or more languages at home and in school has even reached the level of being acknowledged as an issue by national curriculum planners. One theory, which asserts that bilingualism is bad for your health, asserts that due of bilingualism or national planning's fabricated solution, bilingualism does not necessarily lead to balance and could even produce issues that could be harmful. Because of this, there are several obstacles for the Iranian educational system in terms of speaking in two languages in Iran.

Iran has participated in two international studies: TIMSS and PIRLS (Butcher, 2012). The findings show that Iranian pupils were among the worst performers in both studies. Among the

fifteen countries participating in the 1970 international reading comprehension research, Iran placed 14th, while in the PIRLS 2001 study, Iran was 32nd among the 35 participating countries (Hameedy, 2004). Monolingual Iranian pupils performed worse than bilingual students in reading comprehension testing (Pouretemad et al., 2011).

Recent research indicates that bilingualism may increase the rates of retention and repetition. Therefore, the need for overhauling the educational system is due to the importance of using minority languages. This is the second obstacle, and it stems from socioeconomic and political conditions. In Iran, the main languages do not have any importance in education. One of the greatest difficulties emerges when these dominant languages are utilized in neighboring countries as a significant or formal language.

Bilingualism is common. Also known as linguistic relativity, that is, there is no person on the planet who does not know at least a few words in a language other than their mother tongue. In compared with Persians, non-Persian pupils are faced with the challenge of grade repetition and retention, as well as high drop-out rates. An example is that in the province with the highest number of Turkish-speaking people, repetition occurs significantly higher in the first grade than in the fifth, in the rural than in the cities, and where there is less exposure to Persian because of the lack of power and television.

School disciplines in general have a bigger contribution to grade failure/repetition than non-language courses, according to research by Wehlage & Rutter (1985). Due to the fact that nearly everyone in our society speaks two languages, the school system as well as individual teachers are pushed to find some form of answer. As a country such as Iran is composed of a large population comparable to other countries, it must be recognized that there needs to be some type of bilingual education in place for it to be implemented.

2. Materials and Methods

This manuscript, as revealed in its title, is a kind of critical literature review. Although research remains primarily a cumulative undertaking, literature reviews are essential in academia since scholarship is an ongoing process. Comprehensive literature reviews are crucial for practitioners, researchers, and graduate students alike, helping them locate, evaluate, and synthesize publications in the rapidly developing eHealth literature. Paré & Kitsiou (2017) state that it is important to perform literature reviews in order to identify and analyze what has already been written on a particular subject or topic, as well as the extent to which specific research areas reveal any discernible trends or patterns. Furthermore, literature reviews serve as a resource to assemble and synthesize empirical findings that support evidence-based practice. The job of a literature review is to come up with new frameworks and theories, as well as uncover questions that require further investigation. The following results and discussions is presented as the literature review results.

3. Results and Discussions

Many ethnic groups, such as Persian, Turkish, Arabic, and Kurdish people, have historically found refuge in Iran. However, the official language of school teaching is Persian, which is the primary language of the non-Persian speaking majority. This issue has therefore presented itself in regards to millions of non-Persian speaking children, who have to deal with home and school bilingualism.

In a national educational and curriculum planning context, article 15 of the Iranian constitution calls for the right of all language groupings to use their mother tongues in their education and for the promotion of their native cultures. Yet it appears that policymakers and curriculum planners do not give much credence to this article's later point, where it also affirms the equal right of all these

language groups to promote their native cultures. Language is seen by a dialectical constructivist as a crucial social tool that influences overall development (Fairclough, 2013; Latupeirissa et al., 2019).

A child's early conceptual development is influenced by their mother tongue, and is further influenced by the instructional language if it is other from their mother tongue. Even yet, in the case of a youngster who knows and utilizes two languages at the same time, i.e. if they are bilingual, the two languages will jointly give a superior learning resource.

The popular belief in the 1960s was that native-English-speaking kids who learned a second language were disadvantaged. In the 1970s and 1980s, this concept was contested. In order to examine whether there was consistency in bilingual students' results across several subject areas, including mathematics, the results of several different studies were examined. While the majority of students found that their monolingual peers performed better than them, some data shows that bilingual students outperformed their monolingual peers.

There are several concepts that should be kept in mind: The pupils' balance in languages, the degree of linguistic competency the bilinguals have, and the setting in which they learn all go into the equation. A phenomenon such as the home and school bilingualism is present around the globe, and in this respect, people in Singapore, Canada, Switzerland, and many other nations have acknowledged the existence of it through implementation of some type of bilingual or multilingual education system (Romaine, 2013). There are no issues faced by students in Singapore, a country that recognizes four official languages, when it comes to their own and their school's bilingualism. Similarly, the problem in China can be solved by providing students with a better education, as proven by the country's success in curriculum planning. In contrast, in other countries even in Europe, it is difficult to find work as an artist.

Biligualism in Iran

In Iran, the population currently stands at more than 75 million people, making it the most populous country in the Middle East. Despite the fact that all Iranians speak Persian, the official instructional language of the country is Farsi, the language of the predominant population. Turkish speaking population is the second largest linguistic group in Iran. In northwestern provinces of Iran, their community size is fairly substantial and comparable to the number of Persian-speaking residents. It is apparent that the Azeris, being the dominating population in the northwestern section of Iran, are the majority as well as the culturally dominant group.

Languages spoken in Iran include Kurdish, Arabic, and Baluchi. For example, there are minor groups like as Armenians and Aasooryans, who don't have a defined geographic area. Iran, in contrast to neighboring countries, has provinces named after the predominant ethnic group found in them (e.g., Fars, Kordestan, Lorestan, Baluchestan, etc.).

We should bear in mind that most regional languages are Persian relatives and are part of an Indo-European family branch. There are several main languages spoken in the northwestern section of the country, and these include Turkish, which is distinct from Persian, as well as being a branch of the Altaic language family. While linguistic diversity is present across the country, it's intermingled with religious beliefs, and as a result, ethno-political divisions have developed (e.g. in the province of Kurdistan).

It was believed for a long time that having a second language threatened the country's cohesiveness in Iran (Fateminasab, 2014). The national wealth that comes from diversity among Iranians who are born into different cultures, languages, and varieties will now be appreciated, and diversity can serve as a valuable resource for continued social development and renovation as well as the maintenance of social health in a rapidly changing society.

Some challenges with education in minority languages have been caused by the fact that those languages are not taught in the educational system. As educational authorities pondered their

various alternatives, such as a month-long intensive language training for non-Persian speaking pupils, several ideas were presented. But it will not suffice for this objective, as it has only been exposed to the mother tongue for six years. Another, and more accurate, statement is that the absence of the local language from the curriculum while students are still in school cannot lead to improved bilingualism. Instead, this could lead to the development of semilingualism, often known as not having proficiency in either language. Despite four years of training, there still appears to be a divide between Persian and non-Persian speaking kids, according to Hameedy (2004).

The issue of language planning in Iran

The scholarly literature on language planning and language policy contains theoretical and applied research into a wide range of approaches to planning and implementing various kinds of language policies in many locations across the world. Language planning has been an issue for several decades, but it has only become very prominent in the past several decades due to the emergence of sociolinguistics, which is interested in looking at the kinds of problems and solving them. Language planning has gained prominence in the field of research in the last decade.

For Iranian people, it is vital that the position of Persian is properly established, and they should keep a keen eye on the use and spread of foreign languages. Linguistic assimilation is still in use in Iran in the same way that it was in the UK in the 1980s when language instruction was of single language, and instructional assimilation was a benign policy (Hameedy, 2004). Supporting the majority languages in education, as well as giving local languages priority in curriculum creation, instruction, and school time schedules, does not take place within the policy framework of the education system. As a quick timeline shows, modern education in Iran is quite new. The first modern school was established only 150 years ago, however its educational system has been in place for generations. France is considered the birthplace of modern education when Darolfonoon, a modern school in Iran, began teaching the students modern foreign languages such as French, Russian, and eventually English. Islamic ideals are practiced in language planning across Iran, even in the use of the language, however it appears that there is no overall language planning in Iran.

The biggest obstacle in the country after the Islamic Revolution was the lack of an official language-planning strategy, according to Tollefson (1991). Various roles for the native languages in the educational system have been developed in Iran during the post-war period. While the Persian language has been learned as a curricular subject by both native and non-native students, the oldest and most commonly-used model has been learning the language by way of an in-depth curriculum.

Persian and national identity

Twentieth-century history is dominated by nationalist fervor, usually around the insistence that a single state is established for each ethnic group and language. Language becomes a prominent feature of national identity. Iranian identity is strongly influenced by Persian language and culture. In the late twentieth century, there was a particular focus on the Persian language and culture in order to homogenize the various regions of the country.

Centralization of unique culture and language was a remedy for independence, according to Drummond (1980). Moreover, the conditions and implications of bilingualism are rarely examined in Iran, in part because doing so would encourage separatist groups and jeopardize the national cohesion. Additionally, whereas most countries throughout the world have already adopted bilingual and multilingual educational systems in order to deal with challenges surrounding globalization, internationalization, and rivalry among multinational corporations, Iran has been unwilling to do so (Mirhosseini & Abazari, 2016).

Due to these countries, especially Hong Kong, India, Japan, and China, viewing English as a gateway to international trade, and being much more conservative when it comes to foreign language policy, it may be inferred that countries like Iran are less engaged in the global market of commerce. Following the Islamic Revolution, and out of worry that English could pose a danger to Persian and Islamic culture, the politics of the language issue arose (Fotouhi, 2015).

On the other hand, the efforts have been made to assist minority languages. Also, for instance, daily numerous newspapers are printed in the majority language in Iran, local radio and television programs frequently broadcast daily, and the result is that many people tune in and give the minority language speakers with job opportunities. While the question is whether or not broadcasting can salvage a language that is losing its roles inside the family realm, it is important to ask whether or not such an endeavour is feasible on a local scale. Despite their capacity to relieve pressure, radio and television are just short-term solutions to the language's ultimate demise. It is impossible to uproot the root of the problem: the media. With the passage of time, it will be increasingly difficult for the media to engage young people in any meaningful way.

Iran has the distinction of being an ancient developing country as it was founded approximately 2,500 years ago, and throughout history, Persian (Old, Middle, New) has served as the language of standardization. different dialects and regional languages have always existed alongside this lingua franca (Seidlhofer, 2009). Political and sociocultural integration of an old developing country means that different ethnic groups of this country all desire political and cultural integration to be linked with and unified under their Great Tradition.

Fishman (1968) states that past literatures, legal codes, heroes, and leaders are highly respected; countries in the early stages of integration have a better chance of coping with increased linguistic diversity and social unrest because of it. According to Fishman's view, the consistent persistence of other dialects or languages alongside the dominant language in Iran is therefore entirely natural and even expected.

Linguistic division on its own does not cause political divisions to ignite. However, research of Nercissians (2001) study demonstrates that despite significant differences in linguistic behavior, there are certain similar patterns between the two groups. Persian is a valued language both for informal communication and for governmental settings.

They also both aspire to keep and use their mother tongue. We should point out that, for one, the concept of religion, and religion in general, has played a major part in the definition of language identity. Of the 85% of Iranians who are Shiite, more than 85% are Shia. Religious similarities and linguistic variety have resulted in political bonds between language groups. Linguistic partition in Iran has thus far failed to provoke political contention (Callahan et al., 2003).

One may tell that external circumstances have helped foster linguistic challenge in Iran by looking at the large languages in nearby nations, all of which are minority languages. The Turkish language is used in the northwestern part of Iran for broadcasting Turkish-language radio programs for Turkish minorities in countries such as Turkey and Azerbaijan. To foster a sense of belonging to a multinational Turkish-speaking community. Baluchi, however, is part of an even wider language family in Iran known as the Iranian dialect group, spoken in the southeast of the country. However, even though Baluchi is not the major language in Pakistan, a significant number of the population speak it.

The Westernization and National Identity

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, English gained international prominence, and it was taught in nearly all countries either as the only foreign language or one of several foreign languages. Due to the closer political, social, economic, and military ties between Iran and the United States, the country's westernization was accelerated under the Pahlavi Dynasty (1925-1979) (Riazi, 2005).

There are various considerations when deciding on a language to be taught as a foreign language in a country, including government policy, politics, social issues, economic conditions, and education. As a result, English became essential for the Iranian military because it was required for their soldiers to travel to the US for additional training.

In addition, the demand for English teachers increased, which created more private language schools around the country. Many jobs for the younger age need an understanding of English, according to Nunan (2003). Many Iranian students were dispatched to US colleges in order to receive post-secondary education. In cooperation with their American counterparts, Iranian institutions established sister-ship agreements, allowing students to get scholarships for degrees in American colleges.

The post-revolution Islamic revolution had no political ties with the United States, thus in order to boost study and teaching of five foreign languages, such German, French, Italian, Spanish, and Russian, the educational policy makers created a strategy. As such, English has been the major foreign language taught at high schools. While language lessons were almost outlawed in the early years after the revolution, the subject has been allotted the same amount of credit units as biology and chemistry in Iranian high schools.

Promoting Persian as an International Language

To a large extent, it may be said that globalization represents a threat to the languages of nations. The importance of a country's language planning strategies has increased due to the increase in globalisation alongside the rise of English as a global language leader. The citizens of these nations seek to advance the supremacy of their own language within their boundaries and beyond the globe. With relation to this, Iran has developed a long-term scientific plan which proposes that Persian be the world's scientific language in the near future.

The Iranian language has had a significant impact on Muslim societies, challenging Arabic. Furthermore, protecting the standing of English and Persian in Iran and the notion of requirement for English are of critical importance. It appears that the need for Persian is on the rise in recent years. Clearly-defined without any apparent conflict, the functions of English and Persian appear obvious while in contrast, the past was characterized by battle between Persian and English. However, as a result of global technology developments, striving to use native resources in order to deal with societal challenges has gained increasing importance in Iran, where many consider the present world as a western cultural invasion. Studies of language, culture, and identity in Iran are of major importance for educational planning within the corresponding speech communities.

The remaining portion of effect of Persian is also heavily dependent on Islamic influence. The scholars Bhatia and Ritchie (2008) note that because Persian was imposed on the majority of the population of India, it became a signifier of Islam for Moughul, resulting in a boost for the language. The effects of independence in 1947 saw that as a result, following the independence of India and Pakistan, the impact of Persian, which is a Muslim language, began to regenerate in Pakistan, a Muslim nation, while it began to be fossilized in India, a Hindu nation. After India became independent, however, Sanskrit was able to rejuvenate its influence due to its relation to Indian culture.

The term "language group inequity" describes conflicts in the usage of several languages. The findings of Hässler et al. (2019) illustrate how conflicts in language relate to disparities in group power. A society where one language is dominant and one or more other languages is present is said to be bilingual. The higher rank of the speaker is symbolized by the upper language, whereas the lower languages suggest the opposite.

A dominant language group acquiring social, political, and economic dominance will lead to political disputes among language groups. As a result, according to Inglehart and Woodward's

opinion, language conflict is due to language groups being of low socioeconomic, political, and economic position. Iran's linguistic diversity has not resulted in political tensions, as the country is politically, economically, and socially equal.

In order Persian be the world's lingua franca, an administrative reorganization of this type is implemented. Iran is a large country with many students enrolled in public universities (including Islamic Azad University with more than 500 branches, Payame Noor University with distance education, and other private universities), Islamic Azad University (lots of branches), and evening sessions at public universities.

While European colonization, which started in the 1500s in the East, greatly decreased the power of Persian culture, in recent years, the country's economy, technology, medicine, and industries have built up. When we understand that language extension is dependent on economic, political, and social progress, we know how to move forward. In that case, Iran's advanced society can enhance its language. For example, due to the rising leadership of Persian speakers in the Middle East because to the development in Iranian influence, which people in the Middle East need to study Persian in order to better communicate (Tavadze, 2019). It demonstrates the increase in Persian speakers across the globe. To serve as the world's lingua franca, Persian faces hurdles. Iran's national scientific strategy envisions that Persian will be the scientific language of the world by the end of the 21st century. Print design is beautiful, however applying the information in this booklet is tough.

The first step is for the community to embrace responsibility for promoting Persian in a manner that values quality above quantity. It will demand the full involvement of Iranian citizens. Another thing the government should do is to embrace responsibility for clearly providing language policies, and to then back their implementation. In this context, the supply of funding, staff, and other resources is needed for the promotion of Persian. Because there is no Nobel Prize for Persian literature, it indicates that Iranian literature hasn't prospered.

Using the Persian writing system to express math, chemistry, and physics also makes it difficult to use on license plates because it is written from the right. Taking into consideration the phenomena of information and communication technology with English instruction and increasing communications equipment such as mobile, satellite, as well as other developments such as global technology, it is now an issue in Iran for Iranian people to use the English alphabet instead of Persian. While this was happening, Persian was being used in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, places where it is mixed with Russian or Pashto languages and cultures.

4. Conclusion

When both home and school are bilingual in Iran, it presents many difficulties for the educational system of Iran. According to findings from international investigations, this is a well-established fact. According to a number of international studies, Iranian pupils were ranked worst. Curriculum planners always look for ways to solve this problem. For example, they have created a one-month course aimed at preparing non-Persian speaking pupils for language study (Daneshvar et al., 2019).

While these many options will not have a noticeable impact on the non-Persian student drop-out rate, none of them will help Persian students either. Even after several years of schooling, the intellectual difference between native and non-native students is still substantial. Though different language groups all value Persian, which is the common language used in day-to-day communication as well as the official language used in educational and other formal organizations, language groups in Iran display very distinct language behavior. It should be noted that, regardless of race, all minority groups aspire to retain and use their mother tongue.

In light of this, it is essential that educational authorities in Iran choose subjects and content that not just focus on the majority language but also on minority languages. Even if English ever did

constitute a threat to Persian in Iran, it doesn't appear to be the case now. Although they proudly remember their history of scientific domination, today Iran is no longer attempting to learn a foreign language such as English, which has no evidence of either westernization or culturalism. Nowadays, the general attitude regarding learning English has shifted dramatically in Iran.

For them, acquiring new technology, being able to connect with the world, and succeeding in business are all dependent on mastering English. There is also a common belief that children learn English as soon as possible if their parents have it as a priority. Even in tiny towns, a great deal of governmental and private institutions sprout up in Iran because of this statement. Persian has served as the primary language for thousands of years in Iran. Even though this is a common lingua franca, it has always been accompanied by various kinds and regional languages. Iran's national scientific strategy envisions that Persian will be the scientific language of the world by the end of the 21st century. There are both linguistic and socio-political hurdles in achieving this goal.

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