

A Critical Re-evaluation of Linguistic Interference in Multilingual Education: Paradigms, Pitfalls, and Perspectives

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Abstract. This study investigates the oft-overlooked phenomenon of linguistic interference in multilingual educational settings, highlighting its implications for pedagogical practices. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, quantitative data were gathered through surveys administered to 300 multilingual students across five universities. Qualitative insights were derived from in-depth interviews with 30 educators. Results reveal significant correlations between linguistic interference and academic performance, with quantitative metrics indicating an average performance decrease of 15% among students experiencing high levels of interference. Furthermore, qualitative data elucidate the nuanced challenges educators face in mitigating these effects, suggesting a critical need for reformed curriculum designs. This research provides a foundational understanding of the complexities of linguistic interference, advocating for educational frameworks that are responsive to the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students.

Keywords: Linguistic interference, Multilingual education, Pedagogical strategies, Language acquisition, Educational reform, Cultural responsiveness, Quantitative analysis, Qualitative research, Academic performance

Introduction

The global landscape of education continues to evolve, with multilingualism becoming an increasingly prevalent feature across academic institutions. In a world where economic interdependence and technological advancements necessitate increased mobility, multilingual education has gained prominence, reflecting the need for effective communication across diverse linguistic groups. However, this shift has unveiled significant challenges, notably the issue of linguistic interference—defined as the negative transfer of linguistic elements from one language to another. This phenomenon is

particularly relevant as we enter the period from 2024 to 2026, where the demand for multilingual competencies in the workforce is expected to rise notably. Literature in this domain remains sparse, with many studies failing to adequately address the multifaceted nature of linguistic interference and its impact on learning outcomes. For instance, previous research has primarily focused on isolated linguistic elements, neglecting the broader pedagogical context in which these elements interact. Moreover, existing frameworks often overlook the socio-cultural variables that influence language acquisition and interference, thereby resulting in a gap in understanding how these factors converge within multilingual educational environments. This study aims to address these gaps by posing critical research questions: How does linguistic interference affect student performance in multilingual settings? What pedagogical strategies can effectively mitigate these adverse effects? To accomplish this, the paper is structured as follows: we begin with a comprehensive review of the existing literature, followed by a detailed exposition of the methodology employed. Subsequently, we present our findings, followed by a discussion that contextualizes these results within the broader landscape of multilingual education.

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Methodology

This research employs a mixed-methods design to explore the impact of linguistic interference in multilingual educational contexts. Data collection commenced with the development of a structured survey instrument, administered digitally using Qualtrics (version 2023.2). The survey targeted 300 multilingual students enrolled at five universities across different continents, ensuring a representative sample of diverse linguistic backgrounds. Participants were asked to self-report their proficiency levels in their native and additional languages, alongside their perceived experiences of linguistic interference in academic contexts. In conjunction with the quantitative survey, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with 30 educators experienced in multilingual instruction. Interviews were transcribed using Otter.ai (version 4.0), allowing for detailed thematic analysis using NVivo (version 12). The analytical framework utilized a combination of statistical analyses, including ANOVA and regression modeling, executed via R (version 4.2.0) to ascertain correlations between linguistic interference and academic performance metrics. Error rates and significance levels ($p < 0.05$) were meticulously documented to ensure robustness of findings. This methodological approach not only facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the quantitative dimensions of interference but also sheds light on the qualitative experiences of educators navigating these complexities in practice, thereby providing a holistic view of the phenomenon at hand.

Results and Discussion

The study's findings underscore the profound impact of linguistic interference on student academic performance, revealing an average performance decrement of 15% among

participants reporting high interference levels. Quantitative analyses indicate statistically significant differences in performance metrics across varying degrees of self-reported interference ($F(2, 297) = 4.56, p < 0.01$). Moreover, qualitative insights from educator interviews highlight recurring themes concerning instructional challenges: lack of tailored resources, inadequate teacher training, and the pressing need for culturally responsive pedagogies. Educators indicated that students often struggle to articulate concepts in their second or third languages, leading to misinterpretations and reduced comprehension. The discussion elaborates on these findings, emphasizing the necessity for pedagogical reform that integrates awareness of linguistic interference into curriculum design. Additionally, the research posits that fostering a supportive linguistic environment can mitigate these adverse effects, ultimately enhancing educational outcomes. These insights present significant implications not only for educational theory but also for practical applications within multilingual classrooms, suggesting a paradigm shift towards more inclusive and linguistically aware teaching methodologies.

Conclusions

This study contributes to the field of applied linguistics by providing a nuanced understanding of linguistic interference within multilingual education contexts. The observed correlation between interference and diminished academic performance underscores the need for educational systems to integrate effective pedagogical strategies that accommodate linguistic diversity. Future research should explore the longitudinal effects of targeted interventions aimed at reducing interference, alongside the development of curricula that are sensitive to the linguistic profiles of diverse student bodies. By fostering awareness and adaptation within educational frameworks, we can enhance the learning experiences of multilingual students, ultimately leading to improved academic outcomes across disciplines.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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