

## MULTILINGUALISM IN THE WORLD

Yu Beibei (China)

Research Scholar, Ph.D. in Hindi,  
University of Delhi

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**Abstract**

*Language is the key to success and the basis for communication. Better is the command on language likely is the situation to have better results. Whereas each one across the globe has understanding of at least one language, there are people having multilingual ability. The present paper focusses on the causes of multilingualism in world.*

**Keywords:** language, linguistics, linguism, multilingualism, mother tongue

In the word 'multilingualism', the word 'multiple' means 'more than one' and the word 'linguistic' means using languages. Therefore, it means a person who uses two or more languages. According to American linguist Bloomfield- 'a multilingual is considered to be an individual who has a native-like control of multiple languages.'

In the world, more than 90% people live in bilingual or multilingual societies, or use multiple languages on a daily basis. There are less than a quarter of countries have two or more languages as official languages in the world. In fact, no one country is monolingual because even in countries where most citizens speak only one language, there are sizable groups that speak other languages also. In multilingualism or bilingualism society, one language is dominant and the other is secondary. In any state mother tongue is dominant but if a person lives in other state and its language is different from his mother tongue, then for that person, his mother tongue becomes secondary and the language of the state becomes dominant. Bilingual situations in multilingualism can be divided into these categories

Language 1 + Language 2: The person is proficient in 2 languages which is from same language family, such as Hindi and Bengali. They are from Indo-European language family; Language 1+Language 3: The person is proficient in two languages which is from different language families, such as Hindi and Tamil. Tamil is from Dravidian language family; Language 1+Language 4: The person knows how to use one foreign language. Such as Hindi and Chinese, Japanese etc.

**Status of multilingualism in different countries across the world**

Following are the examples of different countries presenting the status of multilingualism in different countries and regions of the world.

India: India has many languages, the situation of multilingualism is not new here, it has been a multilingual country since immemorial time. Hindi and English are the two languages used in official work. Every state has its own language. According to the Indian Constitution, 22 languages are included as official language. In addition, there are many other languages also. There are four language families in India — Indo-European family such as Hindi, Urdu, Bengali; Dravidian language family such as Tamil, Telugu,

Malayalam; Sino-Tibetan language family such as Naga, Manipuri and Austro-Asiatic language family such as Mundari, Santali. Therefore, multilingualism is an innate feature of the Indian society.

China: There is one official language in China, which is modern standard Chinese, also called Mandarin or Putonghua. But there are many languages, such as Wu, Min, and Cantonese are still used in people's daily lives in southern China. In addition, minority languages are also widely spoken in border areas and in minority autonomous regions, and they enjoy certain legal rights and protections, such as Tibetan in the Chinese Tibet Autonomous Region, Uygur language in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, and Mongolian in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

America: English is most widely used in America. But about 20% of the population in the country does not speak English as their first language. Since the 19th century, America has attracted immigrants from all over the world. In San Francisco, New York, Miami, and other immigrant centers, residents of different languages have their own societies. The areas with many immigrants in South America include California, Nevada, Texas, New Mexico, etc. where Spanish is their first language and comprises of Spanish radio and TV channels. Other than this, Chinese, French, Korean, German etc. are also included in top speaking languages. And about 6.5 lakh people speak Hindi in America also.

Switzerland: Switzerland is situated at the junction of France, Italy, Germany, Austria, and other countries. Therefore, the languages used by the various ethnic groups in the country are complex. French, German, Italian and Roman are all its official languages.

New Zealand: This country has three official languages: English, Māori, and New Zealand Sign Language. English is the main language, and Māori is spoken by about 4% of the population. According to the 2018 census, Samoan language was the most widely spoken non-official language at about 2.2%, followed by Northern Chinese (also called Mandarin, 2.0%), Hindi (1.5%) and French (1.2%).

Mauritius: English and French are generally considered as fact languages of Mauritius as they are the languages of government and business. Mauritians are multilingual, while Mauritian Creole is the mother tongue of most Mauritians, most people also speak French and English. They changed the language according to own need. French and English are preferred for use in teaching, while Asian languages are mainly used in music, religious and cultural events, with French being used mainly for media and literature.

From above examples, it is vivid that these countries are multilingual which indicates that multilingualism is universal.

### **Causes of Multilingualism**

Due to historical factors, the causes of multilingualism in each language society are more complex. Usually, multilingualism is a self-choice made by the members of a society, but sometimes it can arise from other external factors.

**Political reasons:** History has been influenced by the annexation of states, resettlement, and other political and military actions. People become refugees, then began to learn the language of the new settlements. When a certain region is invaded by foreigner, the people of this region could also learn the language of the foreigner. For example, in the 17th century, the British invaded India. During the British rule, the promotion of English was emphasized. At that time, English was also used as the medium of instruction in schools in India. After a long period of colonization, English became more and more widely used in different parts of India.

**Religion:** People leave one country for religious reason and go to another country to learn a new language. There is belief in a foreign religion, that's why they learn the language. For example, Buddhism spread from India to China and developed in China. Buddhist texts are written in Pali and Sanskrit, so Buddhists in China learn these languages.

**Culture:** Generally, people learn the language of an ethnic group because they have cultural identification with this ethnic group, in this country ethnic identity plays a particularly important role.

**Education:** People learn other languages to gain knowledge more easily. For example, most countries in the world teach English in schools.

**Economy:** Due to the pressure of life, many populations of backward economic regions migrate to developed economic regions. They change the status of language use in developed economic regions. This may explain why multilingualism is on the rise in America and Europe today. As there are cases in a country, the rise of metropolises and the growth of telecommunications and mass media are also factors in multilingualism.

**Natural disasters:** Floods, volcanic eruptions, famine and other natural disasters can trigger large-scale population movements. When these people settle in new settlements, they start communicating in a new language.

### **Benefits of multilingualism**

The benefits of multilingualism are many, we can see from both individual and society level.

It is beneficial for personal health. Human's brain is like muscle, it needs exercise. In fact, using two or more languages is one of the best ways to help your brain stay in good shape, as well as effectively fight off cognitive decline or dementia (commonly known as Alzheimer's disease). According to Science News, Alzheimer's disease was seen about 5 years later in multilinguals than in monolinguals. This effect is already better than the most advanced medicine at present.

In addition to improving cognitive ability, multilingualism is also beneficial for social interaction. One study found that multilingual children (including those who live in an environment of only two languages, including those who cannot use them proficiently) understand each other better by being able to see things from their perspective. For this reason, the researchers speculate

that multilingual speakers are more sensitive to the meaning of the words used by their counterparts and better understand the speaker's intentions.

It enables enhancing cultural self-confidence and increasing employment opportunities. For the company's business, the language competence of the company's employees----whether it is English, which is widely used in the world, or the local language in the market, it is very important, especially for international companies.

Multilingualism affects personal economy and helps in increasing income. A 2010 Canadian survey showed that multilingual people earned 3% to 7% higher salaries than the average. In USA, studies have shown that knowing a foreign language can help you increase your salary by at least 1.5% to 3.8%. In India, the advantage of multilingualism is even more pronounced. The average hourly wage of people who can speak English is 34% higher than the average person. I have a friend like this, my friend came from China and works in a Chinese company in Gurgaon, he can speak Chinese and English, and his salary is more than 3 lakhs a month.

It contributes to the national economy. For example, a study in Switzerland estimated that multilingualism contributes 10% of the country's GDP, as the language skills of Swiss people allowed them to expand their business to more countries and give benefits to the economy of the entire country. On the other side is the UK. It is estimated that UK is stubborn on English and their lack of investment in language education is costing them 3.5% of their GDP, or about £48 billion a year.

Bilingual education plays an important role in connecting the society. For multi-ethnic countries like India and China, bilingual education is a bond of national integration. Language is the main barrier between different ethnic groups. To maintain social cohesion, communication barriers must be removed, and everyone can participate in various social activities. In China, almost all schools in minority areas have both Mandarin and Minority Language Courses. Only when minority students can speak Standard Chinese then they can communicate with other groups, be understood, and integrate into mainstream culture.

### **Conclusion**

Multilingualism is ubiquitous in the world and has many benefits for individuals and countries. The use and education of multilingualism is very important to us.

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