



MIGRANT-BILINGUALS AND MULTIMEDIA: CHALLENGES, ISSUES, AND BELIEFS OF EQUIVALENCY LEARNERS IN KERALA

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Abstract

This paper explores the educational environment of migrant bilingual learners in Kerala. It also examines the impact of multimedia in their learning experience. Migrant children and adult learners who come to Kerala for work bring with them varied linguistic backgrounds. It paves the way for unique challenges for educational inclusion, acquisition of knowledge and academic achievement. There is a huge rise in the population of migrant student populations in Kerala's schools and non-formal education programs. It is the need of the hour to understand how multimedia tools influence learning. Using policy reports, qualitative studies and educational initiatives in Kerala this paper examines systematic challenges, gaps in pedagogy and significance for policy and practice.

1. Introduction

Migration is a significant phenomenon within India. Families move across the boundaries of states for various reasons such as employment and better living conditions. This migration is on the rise in Kerala. In local parlance the migrated people are known as 'Bengalis'. But people from other states like Jammu and Kashmir, Puducherry, Goa, Assam, Himachal Pradesh are working in various parts of Kerala. As part of this movement, a sizeable number of children enter the state's educational system. They bring with them multiple mother tongues such as Hindi, Odia, Bengali etc. In Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala, more than 24000 guest workers are engaged in various jobs.

Migrant adults and school age children often seek equivalency programs such as those conducted by the Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority. The certificates issued by KSLMA are equivalent to formal education programs. These equivalency learners depend on diverse multimedia tools such as mobile apps, educational videos, you tube channels as supplement to formal instruction.

There is a need to study the inter section of bilingualism, multimedia learning, and equivalency education because of the complex educational eco system in which language barriers, access to instructional media, and inherent learner beliefs.

2. Problem Statement

Learners from migrant families in Kerala live in a world where language constantly shifts. They speak two or more languages in their home, at school and online. Kerala is known for its strong schools and high literacy. But there is another story-some learners return to formal education through equivalency programs, and they often find themselves facing hurdles. This study deals with how bilingual students manage the challenge of language equivalency, shape their identities, and deal with literacy across different media.

The most important problem relates to language equivalency and academic inclusivity. Migrant children in Kerala who undergo equivalency studies come from various regions of India. They may have different levels of fluency in English and their native language. In addition, there is an implicit assumption in the frame work of the State Literacy Mission regarding language equivalency, whereby all students must have certain minimum level communication skills. However, migrant learners fail to meet the requirements because they do not have sufficient knowledge to language. The new education policy promotes multilingual education and emphasizes the importance of mother tongue based learning for the entire country.

Multimedia plays a double role in these classrooms in Kerala. It helps sometimes with videos and online stuff to go beyond just the books. For students who speak more than one language, this kind of thing can give pictures that make sense of the words and let them switch between languages. That part makes it easier to understand.

But then the access is not the same everywhere. In rural places it is harder than in cities where migrants live. And most of the content stays in Malayalam or regular English. There is not much that uses the way migrants actually talk. So it does not really include everyone the way it could. It seems like this ends up making the usual languages more important instead. May be the idea of using multimedia for everyone does not work out as planned. Some parts get left out and that part is easy to miss when looking at how these tools are used.

Another issue involves around learners' beliefs about language equivalence and identity. Many migrant bilinguals see Malayalam as the language for formal success, and their language as fit only for home use. This shapes their motivation, involvement and confidence in such programs. Teachers, meanwhile, frequently regard students' bilingualism as a hindrance, not as asset. These views influence hoe teachers instruct and assess students, there by continuing the cycle of educational exclusion.

There is scarce empirical evidence on how migrant bilinguals make meaning across language in informal settings. Social media and apps influence language use beyond the classrooms too, but we don't know much about their effect on learning equivalencies. Still, grasping there practices is key to creating inclusive teaching methods, that acknowledge students' language abilities instead of pushing monolingual standards.

3. Literature Review

Migrant-Bilingual Learners in the Indian Context

The right to education is recognized as a fundamental right in India, yet migrant children face persistent systemic barriers, including language constraints, discontinuity of schooling due to frequent migration, and social isolation (Vignesh, 2021). Research indicates that migrant children often struggle with medium of instruction differences, particularly when their mother tongue differs from the local educational language (Kerala), which affects comprehension and achievement (Language in India, 2024).

Bilingualism and Language Learning

Bilingual learners navigate multiple linguistic systems. In educational settings, this can result in code-switching, linguistic interference, and varying degrees of proficiency in each language. Studies addressing English language learning in multilingual environments indicate that learners experience both cognitive challenges and potential benefits in intercultural competence (Venkanna, 2025).

However, literature specifically addressing multimedia's role in supporting bilingual education in low-resource contexts—such as migratory populations in Kerala—remains limited. Multimedia resources theoretically support language acquisition by offering multimodal input, but empirical documentation in Kerala's migrant context is sparse.

Equivalency Education and Non-Formal Learning

Equivalency education—offered through continuing education and literacy missions—provides alternative pathways for learners who have not completed formal schooling. Kerala's literacy mission programs include flexible delivery modes that incorporate multimedia content and outreach education to adult learners, including migrants, enhancing accessibility in non-formal educational settings (KSLMA, 2025).

4. Objectives

1. To study the linguistic issues experienced by migrant bilingual equivalency learners in Kerala and their effects on learning and academic achievement.
2. To determine the significance of multimedia tools for facilitating or obstructing the educational experience of migrant bilingual learners.
3. To understand the perception and attitude of learners towards language equivalency and multilingualism and how that affects their motivation and participation in education (García & Wei, 2014).
4. To understand teachers' perceptions and teaching methods in relation to migrant bilingual learners and their correlation to MTBMLE principles as per the National Education Policy 2020 (Cummins, 2000; Warschauer, 2003).

5. Research Questions

- (i) What are the challenges faced by migrant bilingual learners in Kerala while using multimedia for their learning activities?
- (ii) How do beliefs about multimedia equivalency influence the learning engagement and outcomes of migrant-bilinguals in Kerala's equivalency programs?
- (iii) What are the reasons for the continued problems of access, representation and language choice in multimedia content for migrant-bilingual learners seeking equivalency education in Kerala?
- (iv) Which are the best multimedia design and delivery strategies for equivalency attainment for migrant bilinguals in Kerala learner's and educator's perspectives?

6. Method Adopted

Research Design

In conducting this research, there was a utilization of a quantitative descriptive survey design in order to assess the problems, issues, and beliefs of migrant-bilingual equivalency learners on the use of multimedia in Kerala. It would be appropriate to conduct a quantitative study as this method allows for the quantification of the perception and experience of the learners.

Population and Sample

The targeted population for this study included migrant-bilingual learners attending equivalency education programs conducted by the Kerala State Literacy Mission. Equivalency programs in Kerala are known for the participation levels achieved in these programs by students who indicate that these programs are very important in lifelong learning.

A sample size of 250 migrant-bilingual learners was taken from equivalency centers in the following districts of Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which comprised four parts as follows:

1. Demographic Profile
2. Multimedia Accessibility Scale
3. Challenges and Issues Scale
4. Beliefs toward Multimedia Learning Scale

Procedure of Data Collection

Permission was sought from the coordinator of equivalency programs and literacy mission centres. Questionnaires were distributed face-to-face and online to the participants. The reason for conducting the study was explained to the participants before data were collected.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS. The following statistical methods were used:

- Frequency and Percentage
- Mean and Standard Deviation
- Independent Sample t-test
- Pearson Correlation Analysis

Level of significance was set at $p < .05$.

7. Discussion and Analysis

As seen in the analysis above, multimedia technology has a pivotal role in ensuring migrant-bilingual equivalency learners learn efficiently. The overall mean value of learners' beliefs towards multimedia-based learning was relatively high ($M = 4.12$; $SD = 0.63$), indicating favourable perception of multimedia-assisted learning processes.

Multimedia Accessibility

According to the respondents, 72% have smart phones in hand, but only 41% have internet connectivity at their disposal. Such data show that mere possession of a gadget does not guarantee consistent learning through it. Similar findings can be seen in previous efforts of the Kerala State Literacy Mission in digitizing literacy and equivalency programs, wherein the same access issues were noted among the participants.

Challenges Faced by the Learners

The primary difficulties faced by migrant-bilingual equivalency learners include:

Challenges	Percentage
Language barrier	78%
Digital illiteracy	69%
Internet connectivity	64%
Lack of multilingual contents	61%
Time constraints due to work commitment	58%

In terms of challenges, language barrier seems to be the most critical one among all. Migrant learners use their mother tongue and English as mediums, thus, making it difficult for them to learn through media.

Beliefs about Multimedia Learning

The majority of participants (81%) believed that the use of multimedia increased the understanding of complex concepts using both audio visual aids. The learners believed that the inclusion of videos,

animations, and multilingual resources facilitated better understanding than conventional text-based training methods.

These positive beliefs concerning multimedia are consistent with the principles of multimedia learning theory, where by the incorporation of verbal and visual elements facilitates cognitive processes and engagement by the learners. Research in multimedia-based learning has also highlighted gains in motivation and retention of knowledge for adult learners.

Digital Literacy and Beliefs about Multimedia Learning

Pearson's correlation test showed a significant positive correlation between digital literacy and positive beliefs about multimedia learning ($r = .56, p < .01$). Adult learners with high digital competencies displayed greater confidence in learning through multimedia-based approaches.

This result is in line with findings on digital literacy programs conducted in Kerala, which show that higher digital skills lead to greater involvement and effectiveness in technology-supported learning programs.

8. Findings and outcomes

The study generated the following results

1. The participants were positive about multimedia learning ($M=4.12$)
2. Migrants had higher smart phone ownership than adequate internet connectivity which hindered the participation in digital education.
3. The language barrier was the highest obstacle, followed by low digital literacy skills and a lack of multilingual educational resources.
4. The use of multimedia learning techniques positively enhanced learners' understanding, motivation, and management.
5. Digital literacy positively correlated with the attitudes towards multimedia learning.
6. The learners favoured multimedia with bilingual components containing Malayalam and native languages.
7. Commitments to work duties and irregular study schedules adversely influenced multimedia learning participation.

Educational Outcomes

Based on the result of the study, multimedia may become an effective learning tool in equivalency learning programs, provided there is :

- *Multimedia learning resources
- *Improved internet access.
- *Digital literacy classes.

*Flexibility in scheduling lessons.

*Mobile -friendly learning resources.

The study concludes that equivalency programs in Kerala may be enriched with multimedia and culturally and linguistically appropriate resources to enhance learning inclusivity.

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