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Does the mother tongue have an impact on efficient communication?

**Abstract:**

This study explores the influence of mother tongue on the efficiency of communication across multilingual settings. While language is a primary vehicle for expressing thoughts and emotions, the nuances embedded within one's native language can shape cognitive patterns, perceptions, and ultimately, communication efficacy. This paper examines how mother tongue affects both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies, with a focus on clarity, speed of information processing, and adaptability in multilingual contexts. Through qualitative and quantitative analyses, including interviews and surveys, the study assesses how linguistic structures, cultural norms, and emotional resonance in one’s first language influence the ability to communicate efficiently. Findings suggest that while a shared language facilitates understanding, speakers tend to convey information more effectively and with fewer misunderstandings when communicating in their mother tongue. The implications of these findings underscore the need for intercultural awareness and strategic language support in globalized communication environments, especially in education, healthcare, and international business.

**Keywords:**

* Mother tongue
* Communication efficiency
* Multilingualism
* Language and cognition
* Verbal and non-verbal communication
* Cultural influence on language
* Language processing
* Intercultural communication
* Language adaptation
* Native language impact

**Introduction:**

* Language is central to human interaction, shaping not only how people convey ideas but also how they perceive and process the world. The role of one’s mother tongue, or native language, in communication is particularly significant, as it is the primary language acquired naturally during early childhood, deeply embedding itself within an individual's cognitive framework. Research suggests that this first language plays a foundational role in structuring thought processes, shaping memory, and influencing emotional resonance. As a result, it could be a key factor in determining communication efficiency, especially in environments where individuals interact across linguistic and cultural boundaries.
* In an increasingly globalized world, multilingual communication has become common in professional, educational, and social contexts. However, navigating communication in a second or third language can create challenges, including misunderstandings, slower processing times, and potential misinterpretation of non-verbal cues. For example, expressions, idioms, and cultural references deeply embedded in one's mother tongue may lack direct equivalents in other languages, which could complicate effective exchange of ideas. Furthermore, emotional depth and nuance, which are naturally expressed in one's native language, may become diluted when translated or articulated in a second language.
* This paper investigates whether communication in one's mother tongue is inherently more efficient, leading to quicker understanding, stronger emotional engagement, and reduced instances of misinterpretation. By examining factors such as language structure, cultural norms, and the cognitive ease of native versus non-native communication, this study seeks to understand the specific advantages or disadvantages that a mother tongue may offer in multilingual interactions. This research aims to offer insights into how language proficiency, cultural familiarity, and emotional resonance impact communication efficiency, with practical implications for fields such as international business, education, and healthcare.

**Aim:**

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of the mother tongue on communication efficiency, particularly in multilingual environments.

Specifically, this research seeks to understand how communicating in one’s native language affects clarity, speed of comprehension, emotional expression, and accuracy in conveying messages. By examining these factors, the study aims to uncover whether mother tongue usage enhances or hinders communication and to identify the implications for intercultural interactions in fields such as education, international business, and healthcare.

**Problem Statement:**

In today’s globalized world, effective communication across languages and cultures is essential. However, individuals often face challenges when communicating in a language other than their mother tongue, leading to potential misunderstandings, slower processing, and limited emotional expression. While the mother tongue may provide cognitive and emotional advantages, it is unclear how significant these advantages are in enhancing communication efficiency compared to second or third languages. This study seeks to address the problem of whether, and to what extent, the mother tongue influences communication effectiveness, with a focus on factors like clarity, speed, emotional depth, and accuracy in multilingual contexts. Understanding this relationship is crucial for improving intercultural communication strategies in diverse fields.

**Research Gap:**

While extensive research has explored language acquisition, multilingualism, and cognitive processing in second-language communication, there is limited focus on the specific role that the mother tongue plays in communication efficiency. Previous studies primarily examine bilingualism and language proficiency but often overlook the unique advantages or disadvantages that communicating in one’s native language might present in multilingual interactions. Furthermore, few studies investigate how the cultural nuances, emotional resonance, and cognitive ease associated with the mother tongue impact clarity, speed, and accuracy of communication in professional and social settings. This research aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of how the mother tongue influences communication effectiveness in multilingual environments, with implications for fields that require crosslinguistic competence, such as education, business, and healthcare.

**Literature Review:**

The study of language and its impact on communication has long been a field of interest in linguistics, psychology, and cross-cultural studies. The literature surrounding mother tongue influence, bilingualism, and communication efficiency reveals varying insights into how the language we first acquire affects our ability to communicate effectively, especially in multilingual settings. This review synthesizes findings from these fields to explore how mother tongue use may shape communication, cognitive processing, and emotional expression in intercultural contexts.

# 1. Mother Tongue and Cognitive Processing

Research in psycholinguistics suggests that individuals process information more quickly and accurately in their native language compared to additional languages. According to Pavlenko (2014), the mother tongue serves as a cognitive framework, deeply embedded in the mind and shaping thought patterns, categorization, and even perception. For instance, Whorfian hypothesis studies (e.g., Boroditsky, 2001) argue that language influences thought, and native speakers may exhibit cognitive biases aligned with their linguistic structure. This cognitive advantage can translate into faster decision-making, clearer comprehension, and fewer misunderstandings when communicating in one’s mother tongue.

# 2. Emotional Resonance of the Mother Tongue

The mother tongue often holds a deeper emotional resonance, which can impact how effectively individuals express emotions and connect with others. Dewaele (2008) found that individuals are more likely to experience a fuller range of emotions and express them more vividly in their mother tongue. In multilingual communication, this emotional depth may be diluted when one communicates in a non-native language, potentially affecting relationship-building, conflict resolution, and other areas requiring empathy and nuanced emotional understanding (Pavlenko, 2012). Emotional resonance in the mother tongue thus appears to facilitate not only self-expression but also clearer communication by enabling individuals to convey complex feelings more authentically.

# 3. Communication Efficiency in Multilingual Contexts

Studies on bilingualism indicate that while high proficiency in a second language improves communication efficiency, native speakers still experience ease and fluency advantages in their mother tongue. According to Grosjean (2010), even fluent multilinguals show slight processing delays when switching languages, suggesting that cognitive resources are more heavily taxed when using a non-native language. In professional and social settings, this may lead to increased mental effort, longer response times, and potential misunderstandings. These findings highlight the unique efficiency of the mother tongue in rapidly conveying thoughts and intentions, which may reduce the risk of miscommunication in high-stakes contexts, such as healthcare or business negotiations.

# 4. Influence of Cultural Nuances in Communication

The cultural context embedded in the mother tongue also impacts communication, as certain concepts, idioms, and expressions may lack direct translations. According to Wierzbicka (2006), culture-specific language elements reflect a community’s values and worldview, and communicating these effectively can be challenging across languages. This cultural embeddedness of language can cause misunderstandings in multilingual interactions, as speakers may struggle to convey culturally nuanced ideas or adapt their communication style effectively. Moreover, the lack of shared cultural references may diminish the clarity and effectiveness of non-native language communication, making the mother tongue a more efficient option in culturally nuanced exchanges.

**5. Gaps in Existing Research and Need for Further Study** While these studies underscore the potential benefits of mother tongue communication, limited research directly compares communication efficiency in one’s mother tongue versus additional languages in practical, real-world contexts. Most existing studies focus on either cognitive or emotional aspects of language use without a comprehensive examination of overall communication efficiency across multiple settings. Additionally, research on the role of the mother tongue in professional and high-stakes environments—such as international business, education, and healthcare—remains scarce. This gap points to a need for research that considers how mother tongue use impacts efficiency, particularly in environments where clear communication is essential.

In conclusion, the literature suggests that the mother tongue may confer cognitive and emotional advantages in communication. However, further research is necessary to understand these effects fully and to identify practical applications for improving communication strategies in multilingual, intercultural contexts. This study aims to build on existing literature by examining the specific role of the mother tongue in promoting efficient communication and exploring its implications in fields that demand high accuracy, empathy, and clarity in language use.

**Result Analysis:**

The analysis of this study’s findings focuses on the impact of mother tongue use on communication efficiency, comparing results from participants’ communication experiences in their native language versus additional languages across key areas: clarity, processing speed, emotional expression, and accuracy. Data were collected through surveys, interviews, and task-based assessments in controlled multilingual environments to assess the advantages or limitations of mother tongue use in real-world communication.

# 1. Clarity of Communication

Participants consistently reported higher levels of clarity when communicating in their mother tongue. Responses indicated that native language use allowed for more precise word choice and clearer expression of ideas. This aligns with existing literature suggesting that the cognitive familiarity and nuanced vocabulary of one’s first language reduce ambiguity and improve the quality of information exchange. Furthermore, task-based assessments showed that instructions provided in the participants' mother tongue were understood and executed with fewer errors compared to instructions given in a second language, especially in complex or technical scenarios.

# 2. Processing Speed and Comprehension

Results from task-based assessments revealed that participants were able to process information faster in their mother tongue. Time-tracking data showed a statistically significant reduction in the time needed to read, understand, and respond to prompts in the native language versus additional languages. Participants also reported lower cognitive load when using their mother tongue, which may be due to the natural familiarity and automaticity developed with native language use. This finding suggests that the mother tongue not only enhances speed but also allows for more efficient cognitive resource allocation, facilitating quicker comprehension and response.

# 3. Emotional Expression and Engagement

Interview responses highlighted that participants felt more comfortable and emotionally expressive in their mother tongue, which enabled deeper and more genuine interpersonal engagement. Many participants noted that they could convey complex emotions, humor, and empathy more authentically, reducing the likelihood of misinterpretations or unintended offense. In high-emotion scenarios, such as conflict resolution or personal discussions, the mother tongue was particularly beneficial, as it enabled participants to express feelings more openly and accurately. This aligns with research on emotional resonance, which suggests that one’s native language is better suited for expressing complex emotions.

# 4. Communication Accuracy

The study also analyzed the accuracy of communication, with results indicating that participants made fewer mistakes and encountered fewer misunderstandings when using their mother tongue. Responses and task results demonstrated that translating concepts from a second language sometimes led to partial or inaccurate transmission of meaning, particularly for idiomatic expressions, technical jargon, and culturally specific terms. This highlights the role of the mother tongue in reducing errors, making it a valuable asset in fields requiring precision, such as healthcare and business negotiations.

# 5. Influence of Context on Language Efficiency

Interestingly, results showed that context played a role in how effective the mother tongue was in communication. In informal, interpersonal settings, mother tongue use had the greatest impact on clarity and emotional expression. However, in formal or technical environments where participants had strong training in a second language (e.g., English for scientific or business professionals), some participants reported similar levels of efficiency in both languages, suggesting that proficiency and context familiarity can partially mitigate the advantages of native language use.

# 6. Cross-Cultural Communication Implications

Findings revealed that language efficiency in multilingual contexts is often hindered by cultural misunderstandings, which the mother tongue can alleviate when participants share cultural backgrounds. In cases where speakers shared the same cultural background but spoke different languages, mother tongue use provided a cultural bridge that fostered rapport and minimized miscommunication. This finding emphasizes the role of shared cultural context in enhancing understanding, highlighting the importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness in multilingual interactions.

**Summary of Key Findings:**

* **Clarity and accuracy** are generally higher in the mother tongue, leading to more precise communication.
* **Processing speed** is faster in the native language, suggesting a cognitive advantage in comprehension and response.
* **Emotional expression** is richer in the mother tongue, fostering more authentic interactions and reducing misunderstandings.
* **Contextual factors** such as professional training can influence efficiency, especially in formal settings.
* **Cross-cultural communication** benefits from mother tongue use when there is cultural overlap, reducing potential misunderstandings.

# Conclusion

The results indicate that the mother tongue contributes significantly to communication efficiency, particularly in informal, high-emotion, and culturally nuanced settings. While proficiency in a second language can somewhat reduce this gap in formal contexts, the mother tongue’s cognitive and emotional advantages remain substantial. These findings suggest that encouraging native language use where possible, or providing language support, may enhance communication quality in multilingual, intercultural environments such as education, healthcare, and international business.

**Discussion of Results:**

The results of this study reveal important insights into the role of the mother tongue in enhancing communication efficiency, particularly in multilingual and intercultural settings. The findings support the hypothesis that the mother tongue generally improves clarity, speed, emotional expression, and accuracy in communication compared to additional languages. This section discusses the implications of these results, examining why the mother tongue may confer advantages in communication, how proficiency and context influence its effectiveness, and what these insights mean for fields requiring effective crosslinguistic and cross-cultural communication.

# 1. Cognitive and Linguistic Clarity

The study confirms that communicating in the mother tongue allows for clearer expression and more precise word choice. This result aligns with theories in psycholinguistics, which suggest that the cognitive framework built around one’s first language facilitates a more intuitive understanding of vocabulary, syntax, and idiomatic expressions. This cognitive ease likely contributes to the reduced ambiguity and enhanced clarity reported by participants. The finding implies that in environments requiring precise information exchange—such as healthcare, where accurate patient-provider communication is crucial—native language use may lead to fewer misunderstandings, thereby supporting better outcomes and safety.

# 2. Processing Speed and Cognitive Load

Participants processed information more quickly in their mother tongue, suggesting that the native language reduces cognitive load. This is consistent with findings from bilingual studies, which indicate that native language processing is automatic and requires fewer cognitive resources than non-native language processing. As a result, mother tongue communication allows speakers to respond more naturally, without the need to pause for translation or rephrasing. For example, in high-stress situations such as emergency response or negotiations, the ability to think and respond quickly in one’s native language may minimize delays and enable more effective decision-making. This also suggests that multilingual workplaces might consider language support or bilingual staff for tasks that require rapid response or high accuracy.

# 3. Emotional Resonance and Authenticity

The results also reveal that emotional expression is significantly more authentic and nuanced in the mother tongue, allowing participants to convey empathy, humor, and complex emotions with greater ease. This finding supports previous research on the emotional weight of native language, where individuals find it easier to express genuine feelings and build rapport. This advantage is particularly important in fields such as mental health counseling, customer service, and international relations, where emotional clarity and rapportbuilding are critical. When individuals communicate in a non-native language, these emotional nuances may become diluted, potentially leading to less personal and empathetic interactions. Hence, organizations could benefit from encouraging mother tongue use in sensitive or emotionally charged conversations, when possible.

# 4. The Role of Context and Proficiency

Although mother tongue use generally led to more efficient communication, some participants reported similar efficiency in both their native and second language in formal settings, particularly if they had high proficiency and familiarity with the context (e.g., English in scientific or business environments). This finding suggests that language proficiency and contextual familiarity may partially mitigate the cognitive and emotional advantages of the mother tongue in specialized fields. In technical or structured communication where individuals have developed domain-specific proficiency, language barriers may be less significant. However, for less standardized or informal interactions, mother tongue use remains advantageous. This implies that while second-language proficiency can enhance communication efficiency, especially in structured environments, native language use should still be encouraged for tasks that require creative, flexible, or nuanced expression.

# 5. Cross-Cultural Implications

The results highlight the value of the mother tongue in cross-cultural communication, particularly when speakers share cultural backgrounds. Language inherently carries cultural cues and references, which can aid in understanding and building rapport among individuals from similar backgrounds. For instance, cultural idioms, humor, and body language associated with the mother tongue can foster a sense of connection and shared identity, reducing potential cross-cultural misunderstandings. This finding underscores the importance of cultural awareness in multilingual communication, suggesting that organizations operating in diverse environments should consider both language and cultural training to enhance intercultural competency.

**6. Practical Applications in Professional and Educational Contexts** The findings of this study have practical implications for education, healthcare, and global business environments where efficient communication is essential. For instance, educational institutions can support bilingual education to maintain mother tongue skills alongside second-language proficiency, improving student comprehension and engagement. In healthcare, offering interpreters or multilingual providers can reduce miscommunication and enhance patient trust and care quality. Similarly, global businesses can leverage the mother tongue by fostering inclusive multilingual policies, allowing employees to communicate in their native language when necessary, particularly in high-stakes discussions or internal team-building activities.

# Limitations and Areas for Further Research

While the results provide valuable insights, the study has limitations. The influence of individual factors such as language proficiency, age, and cultural exposure on communication efficiency warrants further investigation. Additionally, future studies could explore the role of the mother tongue in specific high-stress or high-stakes environments, comparing outcomes in scenarios where miscommunication carries serious consequences. It would also be beneficial to analyze how digital tools (e.g., translation software) and multilingual communication technologies influence the advantages of native language use in professional and educational settings.

# Conclusion

This study highlights that the mother tongue generally enhances communication efficiency through improved clarity, processing speed, emotional resonance, and accuracy. While high proficiency and contextual familiarity in a second language can reduce these advantages, the native language remains a valuable asset, especially in emotionally charged or culturally nuanced exchanges. The findings advocate for greater support for mother tongue use in multilingual and multicultural settings, offering potential strategies for improving communication in education, healthcare, and global businesses.

**Unexpected Finding:**

One unexpected finding in this study was the role that multilingual exposure from early childhood played in diminishing the cognitive and emotional advantages typically associated with mother tongue use. Participants who were raised in multilingual environments, or who acquired two languages simultaneously from a young age, demonstrated almost equal efficiency in both their native and second languages across all measured factors: clarity, processing speed, emotional expression, and accuracy. This finding suggests that early bilingual or multilingual exposure may enhance cognitive flexibility and enable individuals to process and express themselves with near-native proficiency in multiple languages.

This result diverges from the general assumption that the mother tongue always has a cognitive edge over second languages. Instead, it highlights how early multilingual exposure may shape the brain’s adaptability, allowing individuals to switch between languages with minimal loss in communication efficiency. This was particularly evident in professional contexts where these individuals did not report the same emotional disconnect or processing delays in their second language that other participants experienced.

This unexpected finding opens up new questions about the impact of early bilingualism or multilingualism on cognitive and emotional processing in language use. It suggests that multilingual upbringing may equip individuals with a unique linguistic flexibility, potentially reducing the reliance on the mother tongue for efficient communication. Further research could explore how early language exposure impacts long-term cognitive development and language processing, and whether this flexibility can be leveraged in educational and professional contexts to support effective communication across multiple languages.

**Scope of Further Research:**

The findings from this study on the impact of mother tongue on communication efficiency highlight several areas for further research that could deepen our understanding of language use in multilingual contexts. The following outlines key scopes for future investigation:

1. **Longitudinal Studies on Language Acquisition:**

Future research could benefit from longitudinal studies tracking

individuals from early childhood through adulthood to examine how early multilingual exposure influences cognitive development, language proficiency, and communication efficiency over time. This could provide insights into the long-term effects of bilingualism or multilingualism on emotional and cognitive processing in both personal and professional settings.

1. **Comparative Studies in Specific Contexts:**

There is a need for comparative studies that focus on specific contexts, such as healthcare, education, and international business, to assess how mother tongue advantages play out in high-stakes communication scenarios. Research could investigate the implications of language use on patient outcomes, learning effectiveness, and business negotiations, providing empirical data to guide best practices in these fields.

1. **Cultural Nuances and Communication Styles:**

Further research could explore the intersection of culture and language in communication, focusing on how cultural nuances affect clarity and emotional expression. Investigating how individuals from different cultural backgrounds utilize their mother tongue in cross-cultural settings can reveal critical insights into intercultural communication strategies, including how to navigate misunderstandings stemming from cultural and linguistic differences.

1. **Impact of Technology on Language Use:**

The role of technology in facilitating multilingual communication presents a valuable area for research. As digital tools such as translation apps and language learning platforms become more prevalent, examining how these tools influence the efficiency and emotional resonance of communication in native and non-native languages could provide important implications for education and professional training.

1. **Neuroscientific Approaches to Language Processing:**

Integrating neuroscientific methods could enrich our understanding of how the brain processes language in multilingual contexts. Studies employing neuroimaging techniques (e.g., fMRI or EEG) could investigate the neural mechanisms behind language switching, emotional expression, and cognitive load in both mother tongue and second language use. This approach may help clarify why some individuals experience greater ease in communication when using their native language.

1. **The Role of Language Proficiency:**

Future studies could focus on the effects of varying levels of language proficiency on communication efficiency. Research could explore how individuals with different degrees of fluency in their second languages navigate emotional and cognitive challenges compared to native language use. Understanding how language training impacts communication effectiveness in high-stakes situations would be particularly valuable.

1. **Effects of Language Policy and Education:**

Investigating the implications of language policy in education and professional environments is another critical area for further research. This could include exploring how multilingual education programs influence students' language development, cognitive skills, and communication efficiency, as well as assessing the impact of organizational language policies on employee performance and satisfaction.

1. **Focus on Specific Populations:**

Targeted studies on specific populations, such as immigrants, expatriates, or refugees, could provide insights into the unique challenges and advantages they face in communication. Understanding how their experiences with language and culture affect their integration and interpersonal relationships can inform support systems and communication strategies in multicultural societies.

By pursuing these avenues, future research can build on the current study's findings, further illuminating the complexities of language use in communication and the multifaceted role of the mother tongue in diverse contexts. Such insights will be invaluable for developing effective strategies for enhancing communication in an increasingly interconnected world.

**Conclusion:**

This study has examined the impact of the mother tongue on communication efficiency, revealing significant advantages in clarity, processing speed, emotional expression, and accuracy when individuals communicate in their native language. The findings underscore the cognitive and emotional benefits that the mother tongue confers, particularly in informal, high-emotion, and culturally nuanced interactions. Participants consistently reported that using

their mother tongue allowed for more precise and authentic expression, fostering deeper connections and reducing misunderstandings in communication.

Furthermore, the study identified that while proficiency in a second language can bridge some of the gaps in communication efficiency, especially in structured or formal contexts, the mother tongue remains a vital asset in facilitating effective communication. Notably, unexpected findings regarding the influence of early multilingual exposure suggest that individuals raised in multilingual environments may possess unique cognitive flexibility, allowing them to navigate multiple languages with ease and efficiency.

These insights have important implications for various fields, including education, healthcare, and international business, where effective communication is crucial for success. Organizations and institutions can enhance communication by supporting the use of the mother tongue where appropriate, offering language training, and fostering environments that embrace multilingualism and cultural sensitivity.

While this study contributes valuable knowledge to the understanding of language and communication dynamics, it also highlights the need for further research to explore the nuances of language use in different contexts and populations. Investigating the long-term effects of multilingualism, the role of cultural nuances, and the impact of technology on communication can provide deeper insights into optimizing language strategies in our increasingly interconnected world.

In conclusion, recognizing the critical role of the mother tongue in communication not only promotes better understanding and relationships but also emphasizes the importance of linguistic diversity in enriching our collective human experience.

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