

Cognitive outcomes of multilingualism versus bilingualism and monolingualism



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In the contemporary world, Multilingualism, Bilingualism and monolingualism have received a lot of attention. As such, the cognitive outcome of multilingualism has been explored in relation to the cognitive outcomes of Bilingualism and mono-lingualism altogether. Cognitive outcomes have to do with the ease to which an individual understands or acquires another language. As a matter of fact, cognitive effect is brought about by means through which knowledge is acquired along with skill through mental and cognitive processes. These are actually results of knowledge acquisition through the processes as well as procedures taking place in ones mind. It is important to study the cognitive outcomes of Multilingualism versus Bilingualism along with Mono-lingualism owing to the benefits they have.

Multilingualism in the recent past has become more common as it is associated with high cognitive flexibility as compared to bilingualism and mono-lingualism. In connection to this point, it has been pointed out in the past that there are cognitive outcomes which involve an increased working memory, abstract and symbolic skills of representations, increased attention control and in the larger perspective the acquisition of meta-linguistic awareness. From a larger point of view, Cognitive Outcomes of Multilingualism versus Bilingualism and Mono-lingualism is a topic worthy of study as it helps in determining the best type of education that can be given to children. If multilingualism, mono-lingualism or bilingualism proves to have more beneficial cognitive advantages, then it is worthy making use of either of them in the acquisition of language in education.

In this context, multilingualism has been associated with positive cognitive benefits which can aid in learning among children and as such, UNESCO

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suggested the multilingual type of education. This is to suggest that children should be taught in three languages; mother tongue, national language and English as the third language. At least, this helps to advance the thinking capacity of the children and this is the reason why it has received a lot of attention in the current contemporary world. Therefore, the topic of study is worthy studying so as to enhance the cognitive capability of children while learning in schools.

There have been several consequences that have been related with the bilinguals and as such, they are able to learn a third language with ease as it is compared with mono-linguals. In this sense, bilinguals are those individuals with the ability to use two languages at once. When a child learns two languages at birth, then, this is known as simultaneous bilingualism while when a child learns a second language after three years of age, this is known as consecutive or sequential bilingualism.

In line with this, bilingualism has been pointed out as a positive feature of most immigrants who learn English as the second language. It has been argued that bilingualism interferes with English acquisition whereby languages other than English have been pointed out as to interfere with the integration of the immigrants to the host society. Another point to note is that under the right conditions, bilingualism has the ability to bestow benefits like intellectual, social, cultural, economic and psychological improvement of an individual.

So to speak, it means that Bilinguals have the ability to improve in terms of their intellect as well as psychology. It has also been found by researchers

that the more a country has bi or multi bilinguals, it is an indicator of the high level of educational standards, competitiveness and vibrancy in culture. In fact, bilingualism is a factor that should be inspired and cherished as it has a lot of benefits. Basically, many people have associated bilingualism with negative effects while on the other hand there are positive ones with the likes of widening of one's horizon, increased mental alertness along with an improved grasp of the relativity of things.

Equally important, it has been noted that bilinguals suffer language handicap when tested under the verbal tests of intelligence. In the same line of thought, some other researchers put it that bilingualism has been associated with cognitive as well as linguistic abilities among children. In another research that was carried out by French-English bilinguals and French monolinguals, it was found that bilinguals had high proficiency in both languages. In line with this, it was also found that bilingualism had a positive relationship with the non-verbal cognitive skills.

Generally, Bilinguals have been pointed out as to have high cognitive flexibility as compared to mono-linguals who are slow in tasks requiring cognitive flexibility. They are also able to dissociate concepts from verbal words along with a prevailing ability to outperform monolinguals in terms of divergent thinking and/or creative thinking. On the other hand, there are other outcomes of multilingualism which enables people to be able to learn several languages at a time. It is actually a way that leads to many people changing and adopting national and international languages an aspect that is mostly encouraged by globalization.

As a matter of fact, interaction between multiple languages by multilingual speaker creates new structures along with other emergent properties which are not present in the monolinguals. Multilingual have been labeled as experienced learners and even though it is a hard task to learn multiple languages, they approach the subject with a self driven motivation that makes them to make for themselves strategies of learning. In addition, multilinguals possess the ability to translate languages, that is, one language to another.

Arguably, the use of multiple languages by multilinguals has been associated with improved cognitive skills as well as improved social skills. Depending on the prevailing situation, a multilingual is in a better place to choose which language to use. Certainly, the positive consequences of multilingualism are closely associated with enhanced metalinguistic and metacognitive abilities along with improved divergent thinking. In this combination, multilingual speakers are good in creative thinking, language mixing, abrasion and in the larger perspective codeswitching.

Bilingualism vs. multilingualism

Bilingualism on one hand is the ability of an individual to use two languages with proficiency whereas multilingualism is the ability of an individual to use more than two languages. It is actually the capability to use at least three languages.

Articulation of organization and scope of literature review

Following this point, Ana (2004) points out that there the mono-linguals that has been forced to children in the American education system has jeopardized their capability to learn. In essence, Children have been denied the opportunity to use their language which has the capability to improve their cognitive skills.

Ana (2004) further asserts that there is the cry of a child who has been silenced and thus been forced to use one language; English. In this context, it is expected of the multilingual child to be allowed to use the other languages of proficiency so as to be able to apply a divergent thinking and as well improve on the English learning language. It has been highlighted that it is crucial to teach children in school by means of helping them not only to learn English but allowing them to use other languages they are conversant. Mixing of languages in this case improves creativity of such children.

In the U. S, there have been issues of racism as well as marginalization of the minority groups and thus, this has silenced such children in school who no longer feel free to express themselves in languages they better understand so as to be well placed to freely learn English. Allowing multilinguals to use several languages enhances their capability to translate languages an aspect that helps them to understand English while they are being taught. It is imperative to state that multilingual pupils in education and schools in America have been tongue-tied and thus they have been limited in their capability to learn languages (p. 41). According to Bialystak (2007), it is expected of bilinguals to have a mechanism to control the attention regarding their two language systems so as to achieve a <https://assignbuster.com/cognitive-outcomes-of-multilingualism-versus-bilingualism-and-monolingualism/>

performance in terms of fluency in the language without instructions from the other. In this case, the experience of controlling attention to two languages is associated with the executive processes of control in the bilingual children. As well, it sustains the cognitive advantages of control processes from childhoods to adulthoods. In the same line of thought, older bilingual adults lead to the declining ageing processes. Commonly, bilinguals are faced with competing forces within themselves on which language to use.

Cognitive outcomes of bilingualism versus monolingualism children

Kormi-Nouri, Moniri, Nilsson (2003) carried out a research on episodic and semantic memory in bilingual and monolingual children. In fact, bilinguality has been pointed as to have benefits in regard to cognitive abilities.

However, less has been done in regard to the relationship between memory and bilinguality. The given research used 60 bilingual and 60 monolingual children of mean ages of 8. 5, 10. 5 ad 12. 5 years of ages with each 30 boys and girls for the two groups. They were then tested on episodic memory along with semantic tasks of memory. Word fluency tests were used in this case and as a result, there were positive outcomes on both episodic and semantic memories across the ages. As well, the findings stated that bilingual children have the ability to integrate and/or organize information from two languages. Needless to say, bilingualism is able to create cognitive abilities inclusive of memory. However, differences arose as a result of absence of semantic memory in some sexes while others had episodic memories. As well, episodic memory showed difference among younger children and therefore, this can be improved by doing more(p. 47-54).
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Besides this point, Abu-Rabia & Siegel (2002) carried out a research which examined reading, memory and the language skills of 56 bilingual Arab-Canadian children. They were aged 9 to 14 years of age being instructed in English while speaking in Arabic at home. Following this point, the children used were taught to read and write Arabic. They were then tested in word and pseudo-word reading, working memory and language skills. The results indicated that the children were proficient in both languages and thus established a relationship between acquisition of word and pseudo-word interpretation working memory, and syntactic awareness skills in the two languages. Memory, reading and language skills had no differences between bilingual English Arabic and monolingual English speaking children (p. 661-678). Bilingualism seems not to have negative consequences for the improvement of language reading skills from a general point of view.

In the same way, Gutierrez-Clellen, Calederon, Weismer (2004) compared 44 Latino children performance on the task of competing Language Processing. It tested children with and without proficiency in tasks of processing assumed to call for limited vocabulary. As well, it tested cross-linguistic differences in the memory of verbal working within bilinguals and children with limited second language proficiency (p. 863-876). In spite of the limitation of cognitive-linguistic operations similarity requiring examination, results revealed shared processing skills and differences in relation to the individual's skill in bilingual acquisition.

Outcomes on cognitive flexibility

Adi-Japha, Berberich-Artzi & Libnawi,(2010) gave a task of making a non-existent object since it is used to measure cognitive ability. About 80 children aged 4-5 years who were English-Hebrew and Arabic-Hebrew bilingual children along with their monolingual peers were tested . Results revealed inter-representational flexibility in the drawings of bilinguals along with children aged 7 years of age. At the same time, bilinguals' experience of language was presumed to lead to inter-representational flexibility. The only limitation was as a result of the inter-representation being similar across the groups (p. 1356-1366).

Vega (2010) equally examined cognitive flexibility Spanish-English Bilingual and English mono-lingual children making use of stroop test and Winesconsin Card sorting Test whereby 23 females and 17 males were made use of. Results found out those bilingual children demonstrated better cognitive flexibility skills (p. 7230). In the same way, bilingualism in childhood calls for a developed constructs of mind in order to be able to differentiate languages and as such improve cognitive flexibility.

Theory of mind/ Perspective taking

In regard to the theory of mind, Goetz (2003) examined the effect of individual linguistic knowledge as a particular language speaker or a bilingual and its influence to the theory of development of mind. Children 3-4 years' old English monolinguals mandarin-English bilinguals and Mandarin Chinese Monolinguals were used. They were tested in their languages and results revealed that monolingual groups performed similarly on the tasks. Bilinguals performed better than monolinguals with bilinguals having the

advantage greater than inhibitory control; greater metalinguistic understanding and in the larger perspective high sensitivity to interactions of sociolinguistics with interlocutors (p. 1-15).

On the other hand, Oren (1981), tested the cognitive capability of both monolinguals and bilinguals to label and re-label objects and in this case it involved about 49 pre-school bilingual and monolingual children. A foremost allegation of this study revealed early bilingualism as advantageous to the conceptualization of the perception of symbols. It is crucial to state that the results of the study varied and thus complexity of the concept of bilingualism was pointed out as the main cause (p. 163-169).

Cognitive outcomes of multilingualism versus bilingualism

Ransdell, Barbier & Niit (2006) carried a study on metacognitive awareness as measured by ratings of self in reading, speaking, writing, listening skills of students with background of varied language experience. The results revealed that both bilingual and monolingual students had better metalinguistic awareness of the language skills in reading and working memory than students who happen to be monolingual but with analogous native language skills (p. 728-741).

From the study carried out, it has been established that there is a consistency in the findings whereby cognitive capabilities in bilinguals and multilinguals have been established. As such, bilinguals and multilinguals have been associated with flexibility in their cognitive abilities as compared to monolinguals in the past studies. At the same time, benefits of

bilingualism are established, however benefits of multilingualism are not
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fully established, benefits of multilingualism are mostly documented in adults and not children.

The justification of this study is embedded in the fact that there is little that has been covered in relation to the cognitive outcomes of Multilingualism versus bilingualism and monolingualism. As well, much has been documented of bilingualism and monolingualism but little about multilingualism cognitive outcomes. The study in this case is expected to reveal cognitive outcomes which are more positive as compared to bilingualism and monolingualism. Actually, the study is designed to answer a specific Research question/ hypothesis that there are cognitive benefits of multilingualism children compared to bilingualism children.