

The Effect of Intercultural Bilingualism in English Learning

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ABSTRACT

In the geographies where various languages are spoken, individuals may have to experience learning one or more languages to fulfil their needs. When societies who live together and use various language groups make contact with people who use other language groups and cultures, they have to interact with each other. This mutual effect is then reflected on the languages and brings the term of bilingualism or multilingualism into the agenda. Multilingualism is regarded as the simple form of bilingualism. The acquisition of a second language indicates the ability to use another language. The process of dual-language/bilingualism emerges in cases where people learn/acquire another language in addition to his/her mother language. Dual language or bilingualism can be stated as an individual expressing themselves in two or more languages as effectively as in the mother tongue. The reason for choosing this topic is the increasing popularity of it; because human beings who use various languages all over the world have had to live together for numerous reasons such as wars, migrations, education, trade and etc. In 2022-2023 AY, in order to understand and shed light on students' ideas towards bilingualism, a survey was carried out at a state university in England. We would like to state that the findings obtained from evaluating the attitudes of the bilingual students related to the acquisition of English will contribute to the literature and provide a different perspective in this research.

Keywords: ELT, bilingualism, monolingualism, multilingualism, student perceptions

INTRODUCTION

Thanks to the advancements in globalisation and technology, nations and cultures now have more possibilities for communication. By means of the studies conducted on the origin and nature of language, language is accepted as an indicator of power and civilization which maintains its mystery in every period, in addition to clarifying some aspects of the language itself. Language also highlights the cultural aspects of each society and it is also an instrument that denotes the power of narration, richness and lifestyles of civilizations.

All healthy individuals are born with language skills and abilities and the environment in which they were born determines which language they would acquire in language learning activities. There are numerous definitions of language. Language is a multidirectional system used to transfer the feelings, thoughts and ideas that exist in a society by using various components and rules regarding sounds and meanings (Aksan et al., 2009; Boakye-Yiadom et al, 2022). As said by Bloomfield (1933), language is the creation of very ancient heroes or the production of the mystery soul of the public. This product has been developing since the first man accumulating and undergoing changes. Aydar & Ulutaş (2010) indicate that the fact that how languages exist is the hotspot of studies which work in parallel with modern linguistics. When we consider the social value of the acquired language, one of its most important functions is that it gives clues

about the speaker of the language. Throughout the process of talking, the preferences in different areas of language such as pronunciation, the use of words, morphological preferences and syntax all give the listener some clues about the birthplace of the speaker, his social class, and 'his own identity'.

Nevertheless, societies and individuals may be under the influence of other languages and cultures for various reasons. In geographies where different languages are spoken together, individuals may have to learn one or more languages in order to meet their needs. In cases where people learn/acquire another language other than their mother tongue, the bilingual process occurs. Today, numerous people all over the world are at least bilingual for various reasons. Due to motives such as education, migration, political, ethnic, economic concerns and etc., there is a continuous language acquisition and inter-language interaction in society. In our

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research, we believe that the findings and results obtained by evaluating the attitudes of bilingual students about English learning will contribute to the relevant literature and bring a different perspective.

THE CONCEPT OF BILINGUALISM

In an increasingly globalized world, it is more likely to encounter individuals from different cultures. So as to acknowledge the effectiveness of the interaction, educators should have a sufficient level of multicultural knowledge. The concept of intercultural bilingualism is also critical in the field of language education. Brown (2000) believes that a language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one can not separate the two without losing the importance of either language or culture". Hence, language teachers' intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication competence are needed to be guided since teachers have a role as a resource and a transmitter in language teaching from the point of society.

Although the subject seems to have advantages when examined from a general perspective, scientists put forward a number of opposing ideas about the advantages and disadvantages of bilingualism. In our modern age, knowing more than one language and establishing effective communication creates many advantages for people in the world. In a significant part of the field studies related to language teaching, bilingual and monolingual groups were examined in terms of cognitive flexibility and it was found that bilingual individuals performed higher than monolingual individuals in activities where cognitive flexibility should be used (Prior & Macwhinney, 2010). In today's conditions, bilingualism has a significant role in all areas of life, mainly in academic and social fields. Bilingual individuals have a more advantageous position than other individuals at all levels of life in society due to the languages they know (Bialystok et al., 2009). However, some scientists debate whether being bilingual is actually an advantage or not. There are a number of academic views on the disadvantages of bilingualism. For example, knowing and using more than one language also leads to a number of structural changes in the parts of the brain related to language functions (Li et al., 2014). Nevertheless, they suggest that being bilingual not only leads to a number of structural changes in the mind but also leads to some changes in the brain related to all processes that require cognitive activity (Bialystok, 2017). According to Ardila (2012), the negative consequences of being bilingual are related with a number of variable factors. The output obtained from numerous studies also conflict with each other in terms of positivity and negativity. The negative situations

caused by being bilingual can generally be researched under the topic of negative language transfers and weakening of verbal integrities. It can take a long period for bilinguals to be at a sufficient level in the language they interact.

Barac et al. (2016) conducted a study with bilingual individuals. In the experiment, they aimed to determine in which kind of jobs bilingual individuals had an advantage. In this experimental study, they compared the performances of monolingual and bilingual individuals in line with the classification proposed by Garon et al. (2008). The results of the research denoted that bilinguals exhibited a higher performance than monolingual individuals (Barac et al., 2016)

INTERCULTURALITY & BILINGUALISM

In today's century of growing international relations, no nation or culture can break off with any other country or culture. The development of communication technology, growth of population, tourism and student mobility, the increase in international trade, and the migration movement have increased intercultural communication (Bekiroğlu & Balci, 2014). With the increasing intercultural interaction, teachers' role in the classrooms turned out to be of great significance as they are the ones that shape society. In this aspect, effective intercultural interaction takes place in classrooms as well as all across the world. Considering the role of the teachers in a multicultural classroom, they are the ones who have to observe their learners' feelings, knowledge and behaviours towards people (Seefeldt, 1993). In this regard, teachers should be aware of the cultural variety in the classroom so that they are able to observe the learners sufficiently. It can be said that the awareness of multicultural education can influence the learning environment and lessons (Knopp & Smith, 2005). Teachers and prospective foreign language teachers should have high levels of intercultural sensitivity and high levels of intercultural communicative competence to increase learner success levels (Sarıçoban & Öz, 2014).

According to Yılmaz (2014), bilingualism is an interdisciplinary field of study that occurs as a result of the intersection of linguistics and sociology, and it emerges in cultural and social backgrounds during the use of languages. Different language groups living in in the past, with other language groups. They need to establish contact and influence each other with their cultures. This influence naturally reflects on languages to a great extent and brings up bilingualism or multilingualism. Multilingual acquisition is often referred to as simple variants of bilingualism and second language acquisition refers to the body concept that refers to any language other than the first language, disregarding the number of other non native languages known to the student

(Sharwood Smith, 1994). Bilingualism (in our research, bilingualism will also be used in the sense of multilingualism) is an interdisciplinary field of study that occurs as a result of the intersection of linguistics and sociology, and also a cultural and social background emerges during the use of languages. Many foreign language teachers can teach without any intercultural experience for bilinguals. This situation can affect ability and competence of the teachers in order to interact with students from different language backgrounds in a classroom settings and conduct effectual lectures for bilinguals.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The individual should learn additional languages for some purposes. There are numerous people with either bilingual or multilingual skills in the human population of the world. For example, more than 200 languages are spoken in Australia, and 19% of the population uses a language other than English. The number of bilingual people in our world is gradually increasing. In addition, learning an additional or foreign language in addition to the mother tongue is increasingly becoming common because people learn this additional language for professional, educational, historical, economic, political, cultural, migration-related and similar reasons. As English language is the lingua franca of the world, practically everybody wants to learn English.

Türkiye follows the education programs of countries such as the United Kingdom, the European Union, the United States, and Canada in order to educate and train English as a foreign language. When we look at the phenomenon of bilingualism from the perspective of our country, it is seen that our country provides linguistic diversity and richness in terms of being founded on the basis of an imperial treasury that contains various cultural and linguistic components both politically and socially. During almost all of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, many communities from different language families who spoke various languages continued to exist after the rapid retreat of the Empire's borders towards the present borders. Today, a large number of migrants, especially Syrians, are welcomed in Türkiye. It was stated that there are 5,506,304 people from foreign nationalities in Türkiye including Syrians under temporary protection. Immigrants live almost everywhere in Türkiye, and their number is increasing with new births. There are asylum seekers in almost every field of Türkiye and they need to learn Turkish in addition to their own language. In this regard, Biçer & Alan (2018) state that Turkish is gradually increasing its impact on the daily lives of these refugees. In this regard the phenomenon of bilingualism has become very popular.

THE NEED FOR THE STUDY

The field of educational sciences, which includes English education and explores different education systems in a detailed and comprehensive manner. It has a paramount role in the scientific knowledge and data it reveals about various societies, languages, and cultures (Adamson, 2012; Mirici, 2013). Türkiye generally follows education programs of countries such as the United Kingdom, the countries of the European Union, the United States. When the relevant literature is examined it is noticed that there is no salient research on the attitudes of bilingual learners regarding English learning (Çelik, 2013; Kuşçu, 2018; Mercer, 2017).

In order to ascertain the perception of bilingual students the following questions were asked to the

1. What idea/s do you have about monolingual/bilingualism/multilingualism? Do you have any difficulties?
2. To be a monolingual/bilingual/multilingual, what are the advantage/s or disadvantage/s of it?
3. Do you have anything to add?

METHODS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Method

First of all, a comprehensive literature review was carried out in the research. In the literature review, the author needs to examine the studies carried out so far in detail on the relevant subject when starting the research. For that reason, it is essential to review the past studies. Balcı (2005) denotes, literature review data should be collected, discussed and associated with the problem the situation posed. In addition, this research was designed as a qualitative case study which is valued by a number of researchers (Creswell, 2003; Dörnyei, 2007; Mackey & Gass, 2005). The selection of the students was realised voluntarily in regard to the efficiency of the research. In the study, factors such as age, gender and socio-cultural status of the students taking part in the research were taken into consideration as variables. Bilateral interviews were carried out and recorded to ask research questions to the participants.

The institution survey

The university that the survey will be realized has currently 31,000 students and 3600 staff in the UK. It is a state university. Most of the students are UK citizens. 4000 of the 31000 students are foreign nationals, these foreign students are citizens of mainly European Union, Asia, Baltic, Middle East and Far East and Arabic Countries, and many other countries. These students are studying for undergraduate, post graduate and doctorate education.

Participants

The research population will include international students who are doing their undergraduate study and residing in the UK and who speak English as a second language (L2). The participants in the research consist of four students studying in the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics of a state university in England. Practical and accessible sampling was made in the research. The participant students joined in the interview voluntarily. They were from different countries and studied at the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics of a State University in England. Their ages were between 20 and 24 years old and consisted of two female and two male students. Details of the participant students are as follows

- Student 1. Lithuania. Languages: Lithuanian, Russian, English, Age 21, Female
- Student 3. India. Languages: Hindi, English, Age 24, Male
- Student 2. China. Languages: Chinese, English, some local languages in China, Age 23, female
- Student 4. Tunisia. Languages: Arabic, English, Age 23, Male

Instruments

The survey was realized in 2022-2023 AY. The technique of content assessment is used to evaluate the data and feedback collected from the participants. This technique was used by the help of NVivo 12 Pro programme in the evaluation of the data. The aim of the content assessment was to achieve implications that can be explained in the data collected from the students. As mentioned earlier, four students from different countries participated in the research. The data in the present research was obtained through interviews. Bilateral interviews were carried out and recorded with these students. The following questions were asked to participants and the answers were evaluated by qualitative data analysis.

1. What idea/s do you have about monolingual/bilingualism/multilingualism? Do you have any difficulties?
2. To be a monolingual/bilingual/multilingual, what are the advantage/s or disadvantage/s of it?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The main aim of this study to reveal the perceptions of the participants towards bilingualism while learning English. As stated before bilateral meeting with the students were carried out. In order to understand the perceptions of the participants the aforementioned questions were asked and the answers of them were analysed.

Student 1. Lithuania

Question 1. What idea/s do you have about monolingual/bilingualism/multilingualism? Do you have any difficulties?

Answer: 1

- a. *The more languages you know, the better. It trains your brain and your knowledge about cultures, languages, and the world. You become more connected with people worldwide, more international, and I think it is a significant cause. His society become more and more globalised.*
- b. *Difficulties in expressing your every thought and emotion. It is hard to adopt, I have a feeling that English people can't know me because it is hard to make jokes in English or understand street language.*

Question 2. To be a monolingual/bilingual/multilingual, what are the advantage/s or disadvantage/s of it?

Answer 2: (+) *Connect with people, have friends, from all over the world, tourism, travelling, is easier, brain training, knowledge about cultures, you become more international, smarter.*

(-) *You need lots of time to learn language, you need to put effort, hard to express yourself, hard to explain your every thought and emotion freely, hard to understand jokes or make jokes, hard to understand slang language so I can mix up my mind. In addition, I cannot understand some pronunciation of the native speakers of English.*

Student 2. India

Question 1. What idea/s do you have about monolingual/bilingualism/multilingualism? Do you have any difficulties?

Answer 1: a. *It is difficult to learn a new language initially but it becomes easier to relate and understand the foreign languages.*

b. *Learning foreign languages will enable people to develop their memory and have a wider outlook.*

Question 2. To be a monolingual/bilingual/multilingual, what are the advantage/s or disadvantage/s of it?

Answer 2. a. *It gives the person to communicate with more people in multiple countries and cultures.*

b. *knowing many languages will help you to understand the people of other countries*

Additionally, shortly speaking, if people know many languages it will bring many advantages, but all the regional languages should be given importance.

Student 3. China

Question 1. What idea/s do you have about monolingual/bilingualism/multilingualism? Do you have any difficulties?

Answer 1.

Bilingualism: a. speaking ability of 2 languages, b. the languages - they are used frequently by a certain community, c. it is the recognition of 2 languages, politically or institutionally

Multilingualism: It is called polyglotism that is to say it is using of more than two languages. The number of multilinguals is more than monolinguals in the world.

Monolingual: a person who know only one language.

zYes, for me it is not easy to speak the second or the third language, for the language environment deficiency.

Question 2. To be a monolingual/bilingual/multilingual, what are the advantage/s or disadvantage/s of it?

Answer 2. A bilingual or multilingual person may have more advantages than the monolingual. In my opinion, the world is global world now. We need to communicate with the people with different culture.

Student 4. Tunisia

Question 1. What idea/s do you have about monolingual/bilingualism/multilingualism? Do you have any difficulties?

Answer 1. I think every person should be at least bilingual. Speaking in another language but then forget some words in the language.

Question 2. To be a monolingual/bilingual/multilingual, what are the advantage/s or disadvantage/s of it?

Answer 2. Learning more about the other culture as a language is part of a culture. I hate when people mixing two languages together which leads the language to lose its another language Every nation should keep their own language and culture very much. They should transfer their language and culture very well. They should not skip anything. If you spoil your language, you can spoil your nation. And every nation should know their own culture and language strongly in order not to be under the effect of other nations. If, you do not know your language and culture very well the nation can be spoiled

Lithuania is a Baltic country and Lithuanian is the official language, as well as being inhabited by people of many ethnic backgrounds. The Lithuanian student has a positive opinion about bilingualism, for example, he mentions that bilingualism offers different opportunities to people and expresses many advantages. The student states that when he wants to talk to any native English speaker in Lithuania, he has communication problems in understanding the English spoken on the street daily, some pronunciation and some terms and jokes although he knows English himself.

As it is known, great importance was attached to the teaching of English in India since India remained a British

colony for many years. In India, 22 different official languages are defined in the constitution, while English and Hindi are used in official correspondence. The main languages spoken in the country are Urdu, Marat, Malayalam, Tamil, Bengali, Telugu, Kannada, Kashmirian language, Gujarati, Punjabi and Assamese Indian citizens generally have an advanced level of English. The Indian student has positive views of bilingualism in general and did not mention any negative aspects of bilingualism.

The Chinese student was found to have a lot of knowledge about bilingualism, but the student mentions that the second language could not be learned efficiently in China due to environmental factors. When the researcher asked the student to explain his comment, the student complains that he could not learn English fully because he cannot use the English he learned in the educational institution in practice in the external environment.

The Tunisian student mentions that there should be bilingualism, but that some words from either language can be forgotten, and that he cannot think very positively about people who speak by confusing two languages. He also underlines that individuals living in the country should first learn their mother tongue and culture in a solid way. In general, among the four students, the Tunisian student emphasises the need to learn the target language by preserving the culture and language.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned before, the flow of communication and information between people has changed dimensions in parallel with the developments in science and technology. Furthermore, the number of bilingual or multilingual people is increasing for various reasons. In addition to the development of the cognitive thought system of individuals, bilingualism can be said to have a paramount role in the establishment of social and cultural relations.

In the interviews conducted with four participants, it was stated that they are knowledgeable about monolingualism and multilingualism. In general the participants mention the advantages of being bilingual, but some of them denote that English cannot be learned properly because they cannot learn the language efficiently as they are bilinguals. They also stated that they can give up learning English as they cannot practice what they have learned in the external environment. An another student mentioned that he had difficulties using English when meeting a native English speaker in an external environment. This idea accords with the views of Kumaravadivelu (2008), Bölükbaş & Keskin (2010) and Çakır (2011). These scientists emphasised that language teaching has a close relationship with culture during learning, it

isn't enough to know only the grammar rules, and it is also essential to have sufficient information about the forms of use such as salutations, approving, rejecting or thanking which are employed in the related language about the appropriate and purposeful use of the language. Another participant student points out that bilingualism leads to the oblivion of the use of some words from the languages and he added that this creates a negative situation. This comment of the participant shows that the student is concerned about the culture. This opinion also accords with the views of Schumann (1986) and Al-Amri (2013). They emphasise that there is a possibility that bilingual individuals might encounter difficulties in attributing themselves to the culture of any community groups. In this regard there can be dilemma, that is, they may solely adopt the native language culture or only the target language culture. The findings and results obtained from the this research aim to be able to create a conceptual framework for the researchers who are interested in working in this field and related literature.

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