

THE ROLE OF BILINGUALISM IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract:

Bilingualism affects learning a second language, highlighting the cognitive, linguistic, and cultural benefits that bilingual people offer to language acquisition. Being bilingual increases cognitive flexibility, making it easier for people to handle complex material and adjust to new linguistic structures. Positive language transfer is facilitated by bilinguals' increased ability to traverse linguistic disparities and identify linguistic patterns thanks to their elevated metalinguistic awareness. Bilinguals can better comprehend typical phrases and social nuances in new languages with the help of cultural expertise. Finally, bilingual people who appreciate the social and personal advantages of multilingualism tend to be more motivated, which is a critical component of language learning. By examining these variables, this article demonstrates that bilingualism greatly improves language learning results, indicating that encouraging bilingualism may be crucial to preparing people for success in an increasingly globalized world.

Keywords: second language, flexibility, bilingual, new languages, component of language learning.

Introduction: It is more important than ever to be bilingual in a society where networking is the norm. Speaking more than one language improves social bonds, expands one's professional options, and opens doors to fresh viewpoints. Because of their distinct cognitive, linguistic, and motivational advantages, bilingual people may find the road to multilingualism more approachable. According to research, bilinguals frequently perform exceptionally well in domains that are essential to language learning. A more successful and immersive learning environment is also facilitated by their cultural understanding and drive to learn other languages. The benefits of bilingualism in learning a second language are examined in this article, with particular attention paid to how bilingualism fosters intrinsic motivation, cognitive flexibility, language awareness, skill transfer, and cultural competency—all of which each of which plays a pivotal role in the journey of acquiring a new language.

Cognitive Flexibility and Bilingualism

One of the most extensively studied cognitive benefits of bilingualism is enhanced cognitive flexibility, which improves an individual's ability to transition between tasks and manage complicated information (Bialystok, 2011). This flexibility is useful for learning new languages, allowing bilinguals to process novel linguistic information more easily. The mental agility gained from balancing two languages also allows bilinguals to deal with structural and grammatical variations more successfully, which speeds up the language-learning process.

Research has shown that bilinguals have stronger problem-solving abilities, particularly when it comes to linguistic challenges. For example, research reveal that bilingual children outperform monolingual children in activities requiring sophisticated problem solving, implying that bilingualism improves mental plasticity (Peal and Lambert, 1962). This adaptability provides bilinguals with methods for overcoming problems in foreign language schools, enabling them to navigate linguistic barriers with greater resilience.

Language Awareness and Metalinguistic Skills

Individuals who are bilingual typically have heightened metalinguistic awareness, or a grasp of language as a system, which helps them acquire a third language (Jessner, 2006). Bilinguals frequently have a better understanding of grammatical rules, syntactic structures, and vocabulary, making it easier for them to identify linguistic patterns in new languages. This awareness is useful while studying a foreign language since bilinguals are better able to understand the fundamental structure of language and identify distinctions and similarities between languages. Metalinguistic abilities also help to manage language transfer, which is the process of applying information from one language to another. Positive transfer occurs when language similarities aid learning, whereas negative transfer is caused by structural differences (Ringbom, 1987). Bilinguals, with their improved metalinguistic awareness, can frequently maximize positive transmission, while minimizing negative transfer, making them more adept at foreign language acquisition.

Transfer of Skills Between Languages

One important advantage of bilingualism in foreign language learning is skill transfer, which allows bilinguals to apply their prior linguistic expertise to a new language (Odlin, 1989). People who are bilingual

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frequently have cross-linguistic vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation abilities. For instance, the linguistic similarities between Spanish and Italian, such as similar grammatical structures and shared Latin roots, may make learning Italian easier for a bilingual speaker of Spanish and English (Grosjean, 2010). Furthermore, bilinguals may find it easier to pick up new languages with diverse grammatical rules because they are used to adjusting to various language patterns. According to studies, bilinguals adapt to the distinctive characteristics of a foreign language more quickly than monolinguals, enabling them to pick up the fundamentals of a new language more quickly (Cenoz, 2003). This flexibility demonstrates the cognitive benefits of bilingualism in supporting the educational process.

Cultural Knowledge and Linguistic Context

Culture and language have a close connection, and bilinguals frequently comprehend the nuances of their respective cultures better. Bilinguals can more readily comprehend idiomatic expressions, social cues, and cultural references in a new language thanks to this cultural expertise, which has benefits for foreign language learners (Kecskes, 2013). Learning a language like German can be made easier by a multilingual speaker of English and French, for instance, who may have a more sophisticated grasp of Western European cultural norms. Additionally, cultural awareness makes bilinguals more sensitive to the social components of language, which makes it easier for them to adjust to cultural differences in situations where they are speaking a foreign language. Beyond vocabulary and grammar, this knowledge aids bilinguals in navigating the interpersonal and emotional aspects of communicating in a foreign language. This cultural expertise can make conversations in a foreign language feel more genuine and relevant, as Kecskes (2013) points out.

Bilingualism and Motivation in Foreign Language Learning

Because bilinguals may be more likely to see the advantages of multilingualism, bilingualism frequently increases motivation to study multiple languages (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). A person's perseverance and willingness to practice are influenced by their motivation, which is a crucial component in language acquisition. According to research, bilinguals frequently have more faith in their capacity to pick up a new language since they have already gone through the process of learning a second language (Dörnyei, 2009). Because of their increased self-assurance, bilinguals participate more actively in language-learning activities, which increases their openness to criticism and decreases their fear of making mistakes.

Bilinguals' intrinsic motivation is frequently linked to their desire to interact with people from other backgrounds and expand their cultural horizons. The probability of success can be raised by this motivation, which can lead to a more dedicated and passionate approach to learning a foreign language (Ushioda, 2011). Bilinguals are frequently more patient and persistent, traits necessary for learning a new language, because they are more accustomed to the process and benefits of language acquisition.

Conclusion: Bilingualism offers cognitive, linguistic, and cultural benefits that greatly improve learning a foreign language. Stronger metalinguistic abilities increased cognitive flexibility, and the capacity to transfer linguistic knowledge are all characteristics of bilingual people that support more successful language learning. Additionally, bilinguals are well-suited for success in foreign language schools due to their motivation and cultural awareness. Promoting bilingualism may be one of the best ways to get people ready for success in a multilingual environment as society grows increasingly interconnected.

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