

WHO ARE BETTER LEARNERS: MONOLINGUALS, BILINGUALS OR MULTILINGUALS?

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ABSTRACT

In educational establishments, whether it is kindergarten, school or higher education, there are a variety of learners. Some of them speak one single language (monolingual), others speak two languages (bilingual) and some others speak more than two languages (multilingual). Teachers experience a variety of students with varying backgrounds. There are a few factors that affect learners becoming any type of learner. In this article, I will review the literature to identify those who learn better than others and I will conclude with my final comment.

Keywords: *bilingual, monolingual, multilingual, first language, mother tongue*

Introduction

In my teaching career, I have come across a variety of students whose language background is sometimes surprising, and even astonishing to me. From my professional experience, I have seen students who are monolingual, bilingual and multilingual. It has always been interesting for me to know the reasons behind being one of these students. To my surprise, each type of student is a different learner. Some learn slowly, others faster and others face many problems. Let us now investigate these terms.

Literature review

Nordquist (2019) defines the three concepts. He uses the term *multilingualism* to refer to people who speak three or more languages fluently. The people who speak more than two languages are called *multilinguals* or *polyglots*.

Further, Nordquist (2020) defines *first language* and *mother tongue*. These terms are used for those who speak any language first time when they are born. *Monolingualism* is generally known by researchers and academicians.

If people speak two languages effectively are called *bilingual*. Commonly, *bilingualism* is used in the literature review. Nordquist (2020) says that more than half of the world's population are bilinguals or multilinguals.

Speaking more than one language is beneficial for users as well as those around. It is an interesting interaction among different cultures, languages and social background. The environment where children speak more than one language creates a learning, positive and social atmosphere. Immigrants who reside in the United States speak in their native language and it is good that they use it because their children will become bilingual. Being bilingual has more advantages over their peers since their linguistic ability is better while learning new languages, opportunities in the job market, etc. they can also communicate with people from other countries (Lu, 2020).

Akhmadjonov (2023) explains the role of English and Russian in Central Asia. He points out that English is really important for young people to be successful in their academic and personal life. However, Russian is also significant in some countries like Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. In these countries, Uzbek and Kyrgyz are first languages of people living in this area. But they prefer to use Russian because it is more popular, widely spoken, widely-used language in all spheres of life including education, medicine, governing, etc. In these countries, people can be called bilinguals because they speak fluently in Russian. The ability to speak Russian gives more opportunities like good job, promotion, successful business and so on.

My Classroom

I work at the public university as an associate professor and I teach Business English and Finance to students. Students come from different language and social background. Students in the Russian language instruction classes speak effectively more than one language. Ethnically they are Uzbek but they also are good at Russian. In simple terms, they are bilinguals. As Nordquist (2019) puts it, my students in the Russian language instruction classes speak both Russian and Uzbek effectively. Also, they learn English as a foreign language. As their studies continue, they in their second year, are allowed to choose a second language. Upon graduating their studies at the university, they will become multilinguals. They will be able to speak in four languages: Uzbek, Russian, English and a new foreign language they choose. In the classes where Uzbek is the language of education, students can only speak effectively in Uzbek. They also learn English as a foreign language and a second language in the next academic year. I must say that my students who are bilingual are more capable and academically and personally developed than monolingual peers. Akhmadjonov (2023) in his article pointed out that bilingual students are completely different in many aspects like quick witted, capable, organized and better academic performers.

Discussion

The literature review shows that students' ability to speak more than one language has more priority over their peers. Monolinguals tend to be less active, introvert and less capable. Bilinguals and multilinguals learn new languages faster and effectively. As parents, we must encourage our children to learn new languages. Universities ought to give chances to students to choose a second language among many options.

Conclusion

It can be said that learning is much easier when students have experienced practicing new languages and cultures. It is never late to learn a new language and become bilingual or multilingual. Thus, it is time to start learning a new mother tongue.

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