

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10802067>

THE IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF BEING BILINGUAL

Shirova Madina Sunnatillo qizi

Faculty of English philology and teaching, Uzbekistan State World Languages
University, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Student

sherovamadina2003@icloud.com

Ziyodullayeva Aziza Akmalovna

ESL teacher of Uzbekistan State World Languages University at Faculty of English
philology and teaching, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Scientific adviser

aziziyodullayeva@mail.ru

ABSTRACT

This thesis is devoted to make a research about benefits of being bilingual. Acquiring multiple languages is advantageous for individuals, families, and society as a whole. Early childhood educators can inform families and communities about the advantages of being bilingual, assist in maintaining children's native languages, and promote the importance of preserving linguistic diversity. Nurturing a child's first language sets the stage for literacy development, enabling them to become proficient in reading and writing in multiple languages. Studies have highlighted numerous advantages associated with bilingualism and literacy.

Key words: *bilingual, biliterate, language, brain, family, peers, culture.*

INTRODUCTION

The readiness and success of children who are bilingual or multilingual learners are closely linked to their proficiency in their native language. Bilingual and multilingual children experience academic benefits from being proficient in more than one language in various ways. Their ability to switch between languages helps them develop more adaptable problem-solving skills. Being able to read and think in multiple languages enhances their capacity for abstract thinking, which is crucial for learning. Recent studies indicate that individuals who speak multiple languages are more adept at filtering out irrelevant information, a skill that may manifest as early as seven months of age. Children who learn to read in their first language establish a solid foundation for acquiring a second language, enabling them to transfer their reading skills effectively.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Bilingual and biliterate individuals have the ability to transition between two distinct language systems, showcasing active and flexible brain function. Studies suggest that bilingual individuals find it easier compared to their monolingual counterparts when it comes to:

- understanding math concepts and solving word problems¹;
- developing strong thinking skills²;
- using logic³;
- focusing, remembering, and making decisions⁴;
- thinking about language⁵;
- learning other languages⁶.

Understanding math concepts and solving word problems¹

Understanding math concepts involves grasping the fundamental principles, rules, and relationships that govern various mathematical topics, such as arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and calculus. It includes comprehending the meaning behind mathematical symbols, operations, and equations. Solving word problems requires applying mathematical concepts to real-life situations presented in written or verbal

form. It involves translating the information provided in the problem into mathematical expressions or equations, identifying the appropriate mathematical operations to use, and solving for the unknowns to find the solution. Word problems often require critical thinking, analytical skills, and the ability to interpret and analyze data effectively.

Developing strong thinking skills²

Developing strong thinking skills involves honing the ability to analyze, evaluate, and solve problems effectively. It encompasses critical thinking, creative thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, and logical reasoning.

Strengthening these skills enables individuals to approach challenges with confidence, adapt to new situations, and make informed decisions in various contexts.

Using logic³

Using logic involves employing reasoning based on principles of validity, coherence, and consistency to draw conclusions or make decisions. It entails identifying and evaluating arguments, detecting fallacies, and constructing sound reasoning. Logic helps individuals analyze problems systematically, identify patterns, and make informed judgments. It is essential in fields such as mathematics, philosophy, computer science, and critical thinking.

Focusing, remembering, and making decisions⁴

Focusing on remembering and making decisions involves directing attention towards relevant information, retaining important details, and utilizing cognitive processes to reach conclusions or choices. It requires concentration, effective memory strategies, and the ability to evaluate options based on various factors. This cognitive process is essential for tasks ranging from recalling information for exams to making significant life decisions.

Thinking about language⁵

Thinking about language involves considering how language is structured, acquired, and used to convey meaning. It encompasses various aspects such as syntax, semantics, phonology, morphology, and pragmatics. Language thinking also involves understanding how language shapes and reflects culture, cognition, and

communication. Studying language cognition sheds light on how humans process and comprehend language, including speech production, comprehension, and language acquisition in both first and second languages.

Learning other languages⁶

Learning other languages involves acquiring proficiency in a language other than one's native tongue. It encompasses developing skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the target language. Language learning often involves exposure to vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and cultural nuances.

It enhances communication abilities, cultural understanding, and cognitive flexibility. Language learning methods can vary, including formal instruction, immersion programs, self-study, and technology-based platforms.

Social-Emotional Development

Having proficiency in two languages helps children maintain strong connections with their family, culture, and community, which are crucial components of their developing identity. Additionally, bilingual children can easily form new friendships and build strong relationships using their second language, a valuable skill in our diverse society. Studies indicate that infants raised in bilingual homes demonstrate improved self-control, a significant factor linked to academic achievement.

Long-Term Success

One-half to two-thirds of adults around the world speak at least two languages. In today's global society, they have many advantages. Globally, bilingual and biliterate adults have more job opportunities than monolingual adults⁷.

Bilingual and biliterate individuals have the opportunity to participate in the global community in more ways, get information from more places, and learn more about people from other cultures.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the importance and benefits of being bilingual are undeniable in today's interconnected world. Bilingualism not only enhances communication skills but also promotes cognitive flexibility, problem-solving abilities, and cultural

awareness. Moreover, being bilingual opens up opportunities for career advancement, cultural exchange, and personal growth. As the global landscape continues to evolve, individuals who are proficient in more than one language are better equipped to navigate diverse environments and thrive in a multicultural society. Therefore, investing in bilingual education and fostering language proficiency from an early age is essential for reaping the myriad advantages that bilingualism offers, both personally and professionally.

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