

Bilingualism and L3 Acquisition

The main purpose of this study is to examine if bilingual Turkish (Azerbaijani) speaking students would react differently from the Persian monolingual students to the 3rd language.

Research on cognitive and metalinguistic abilities of bilingual children seems to lead to the conclusion that bilinguals might benefit more from having this specific learning experience. This theory thus generated the following research question & research hypothesis :

Research Question: What is the effect of Bilingualism on the 3rd language learning?

Research Hypothesis: Bilinguals would learn a third language in a different and more efficient way than monolinguals and this would be reflected in the learners' written performance .

Two groups of bilingual and monolingual participants, 10 students in each group were chosen randomly as the participants of this study. A number of grammatical judgment, translation and essay writing tests were administered after ten sessions of instruction on some aspects of language development. The results of the statistical analyses supported our hypothesis that there was significant difference between the bilinguals' and monolinguals' performances.

This paper concludes that , in learning L3, bilinguals derive more benefit from their special learning experience of L2 language than monolinguals with the help of their better developed metalinguistic awareness.

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It is reported that over a billion people in the world speak more than one language fluently. According to Grosjean (1982:vii) it is estimated that half of the population of the world is bilingual. In the Philippines, for example, many people must speak three languages if they are to engage fully in their community's social affairs. They must speak the national language, Philipino; one of the eighty-seven local vernaculars; and English or Spanish. In the Netherlands, most children are required to study at least one foreign language in school, and sometimes several. Most adults in the Netherlands speak German, French, and English in addition to Dutch. Throughout much of the world, being able to speak at least two languages, and sometimes three or four, is necessary to function in society. (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982: 9).

Robins (1989:402) also reports that recent movements of population in the form of immigration from less economically favored areas to more favored areas have highlighted what has always been a linguistic phenomenon in some part of the world, bilingualism, the existence of people speaking and needing to speak and understand two languages in a community in which both languages (and sometimes others as well) are in regular use.

Meanwhile a large number of immigrants have moved from the third world into industrialized countries and bilingual/bicultural education has thus become an issue of concern in many parts of the world. (Chastain, 1988:16).

Martin-Jones (2000) states that classroom-based research in bilingual settings is now entering its third decade. Its origins lie in studies, which were carried out in bilingual education programs in the United States in the later half of he 1970s. Their aim was to throw

light on the ways in which teachers and learners were getting things done bilingually.

Though research in the area of trilingualism is rare, most of what is true of bilingualism hold also for multilingualism (Malmkjaer & Anderson,1996). Bilingualism and trilingualism are thus the most important issues in multilingual communities, specifically in foreign language education programs and have consequently attracted the attention of many researchers, foreign language instructors and syllabus designers.

Surprisingly, as mentioned earlier, research into the third language learning is rare. Therefore, much more investigations and research, particularly, classroom-based and data-based studies, are needed. Of course progress has been made in this area and we are now more capable of identifying the problems, and we must work to solve them in the light of findings of the experimental studies. As Sharp (1973) claims it may well be that bilingualism has a beneficial effect on the individual's school programs. It should be stated at this point that each bilingual community is unique and has its own language problems. But these problems may be of the same kind as those encountered in other communities, and for this reason the study of these problems in one area can have a wider application.

Research on cognitive and metalinguistic abilities of bilingual children seems to lead to the conclusion that bilinguals might benefit from having this specific learning experience. It is thus believed that bilinguals would learn a third language in a different and more efficient way than monolinguals. There are studies which show that learners who are bilingual appear to acquire an L3 relatively more easily than unilinguals acquire an L2. This relative success, according to Thomas (1992) and Nation and McLaughlin (1986) is attributable

to advanced cognitive skills. Thomas believes that it is so because metalinguistic awareness of bilingualism is higher than monolinguals. Bilinguals would then stand a better chance to analyze language as an object and finally develop it relatively easily than monolinguals do. Meijers (1990) found that bilinguals derive more benefit from context than monolinguals with the help of their better developed metalinguistic awareness. Meijers found that bilinguals profit more from the similarities in the cognates because they use previous language knowledge in an efficient way.

Malmkjaer and Anderson (1996) argue that there is no firm evidence to suggest that being brought up bilingually causes an individual any kind of disturbance, and it is worth pointing out that in many parts of the world, bilingualism or multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception. However, there is no firm evidence, either, that being bilingual has any other benefits to the bilingual than that of being able to converse in two languages, and, in most cases, being familiar with two cultures. Bilinguals are no more intelligent on average, than monolinguals (McLaughlin, 1978; Grosjean, 1982). Bialystok and Herman (1999) comparing the development of the skills (experience with stories and book reading, phonological awareness) by bilingual and monolingual children, found that in all these three areas, research has been contradictory regarding whether or not bilingual children differ from their monolingual peers.

Sharp (1973: 40) advises that in our attempt to explore bilingualism we must ask ourselves how being bilingual affects the individual, and particularly whether any effects are advantageous or disadvantageous. Sharp reports that there has been a great deal of research into the relationship between bilingualism and intelligence and attainment, but the results are contradictory, mainly because of two problems

encountered by those conducting surveys. The first has been dealt with already: the difficulty of defining bilingualism and a bilingual... . The second problem is common to all research in education and the social sciences: how can we isolate bilingualism as a variable from all the other factors in the total situation? Can we be sure that an observed effect is caused by the effect of being bilingual and not, for example, by home background, father's occupation or school policy and teaching method?

Dulay et al. (1982:10) refer to psycholinguistic studies which indicate that people who control more than one language are verbally more skillful than monolinguals, and they mature earlier with respect to linguistic abstraction skills. Lerea and Laporta (1971) and Palmer (1972) report, for example, that bilinguals have better auditory memory than monolinguals, and Slobin (1968) found that bilinguals are better at intuiting meaning from unknown words. Peale and Lambert (1962) concluded that ten-year-old who spoke both French and English demonstrated higher skill in linguistic abstraction than their monolingual counterparts.

It has been argued that bilingual children are most likely to suffer by comparison with monoglots in the area of language, especially if verbal intelligence tests in the second language (English) are used, but Sharp (1973) reports that research evidence indicates bilinguals do not suffer by comparison with unilinguals in non-verbal tests of intelligence.

Nation and McLaughlin (1986) carried out a study to investigate how multilingual subjects differed from monolingual subjects in learning a novel language. Specifically, they wanted to see if they could isolate particular aspects of the learning process where multilinguals, because of their greater experience with language, have access to automatic

processes that are not at the disposal of less experienced language learners. They believe that bilinguals become aware of the structural similarities and differences between their two languages and develop a special sensitivity to linguistic feedback from the environment. They also added that another possibility is that multilingual subjects possess more successful higher-order plans or organizing linguistic stimuli. They discuss that multilinguals are likely to have at their disposal more automatized basic linguistic skills that permit them to allocate more processing resources to higher level tasks. Nation and McLaughlin (1986) concluded that on this basis one would predict that multilingual subjects would do better than other subjects on grammars that are randomly structured.

Chitiri and Willows (1997) carried out a study which examined the word recognition of proficient bilinguals in their mother tongue (Greek) and in English in relation to the linguistic and syntactic characteristics along which the two languages differ. Their processes were then compared with those of monolingual readers. The results indicated that bilingual readers performed differently in each of their two languages, conforming more to the monolingual patterns in their mother tongue than to those in their second language.

Method

Subjects. Ten monolingual and ten bilingual male and female third year English majors were chosen randomly as the participants of this study.

Material

One multiple grammar test, one translation test and an essay test were administered to these participants during the first semester in 2001 to collect data for this study.

Procedure

Three tests of grammar, translation and essay writing were administered in a two-week interval to find whether bilinguals differ from their monolingual peers in terms of their language proficiency and in its different components. Students' written performances were coded and scored by the researcher.

Results

The data obtained from two groups' performances were analyzed statistically. SPSS program was employed for statistical analyses. The results of statistical analyses revealed that there were significant differences between bilinguals and monolinguals in terms of their performances in translation and essay writing tests. No significant difference was found between these two groups in terms of their performance in grammar test.

A summary of the statistical analyses conducted to test the hypothesis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Statistical T-test

Variables	df	F-value	P-value
Grammar Test	18	.69	.49
Translation Test	18	17.21	.000
Essay Test	18	17.99	.000

As a result, the research hypothesis that bilinguals would learn the third language in a different and more efficient way than monolinguals and this would be reflected in the learners' written performance was supported by the results of the statistical analyses.

The means and standard deviations for the three tests administered for two groups of bilinguals and monolinguals are presented in Tables, 2, 3 and 4. Meanwhile the differences between the bilinguals and monolinguals are illustrated in figures 1, 2, and 3 too.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for Grammar Test

Group	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bilinguals	10	15.60	1.07
Monolinguals	10	15.20	1.47

As shown in Table 2, bilinguals' and monolinguals' means were identical for grammar test. In fact, though the result was in line with our prediction, no significant difference was found between the two groups' performances.

This slight difference between bilinguals' and monolinguals' performances in grammar test is also illustrated in Figure 1.

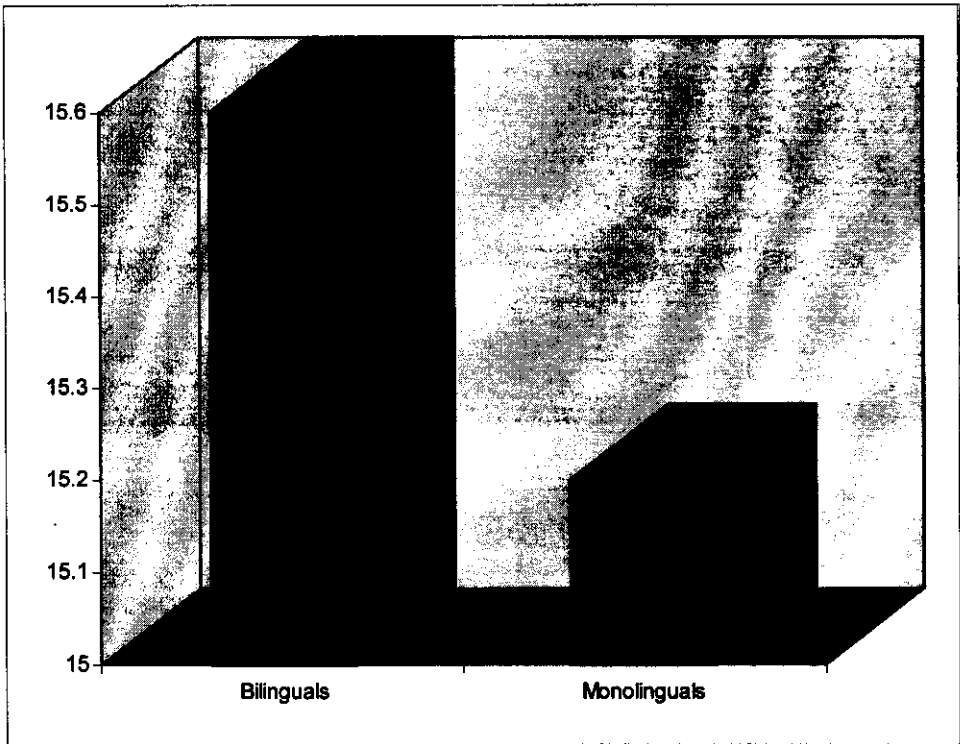


Figure 1. Grammar Performance of Bilinguals & Monolinguals

As Table 3 indicates, bilinguals did better than monolinguals in translation test.

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for Translation Test

Group	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bilinguals	10	15.70	1.00
Monolinguals	10	12.15	1.24

This difference is illustrated in Figure 2.

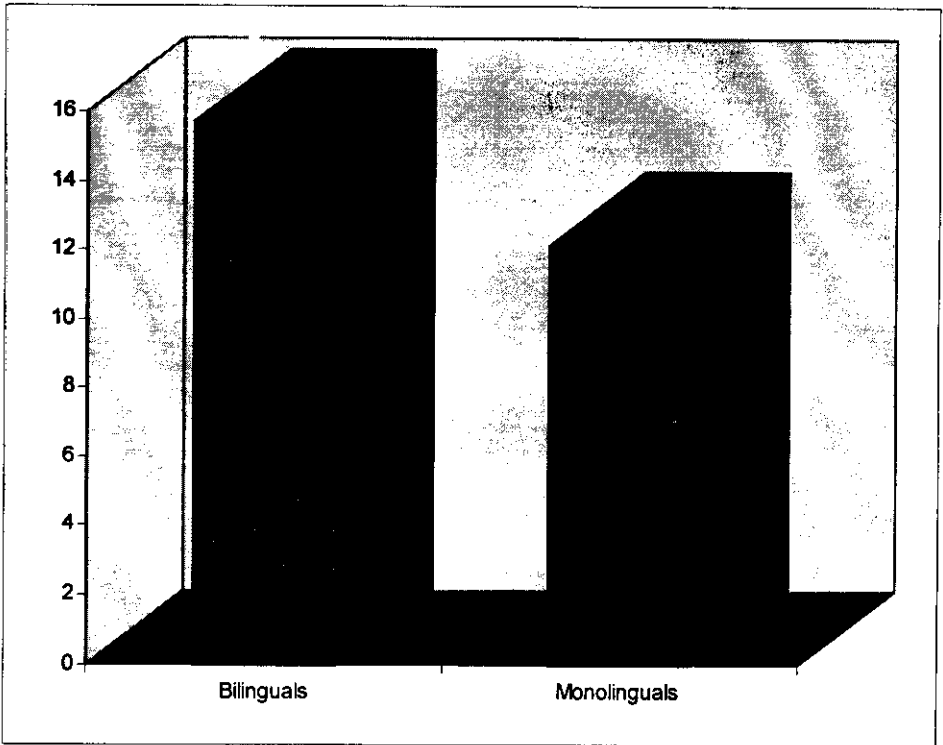


Figure 2. Translation Performance of Bilinguals & Monolinguals

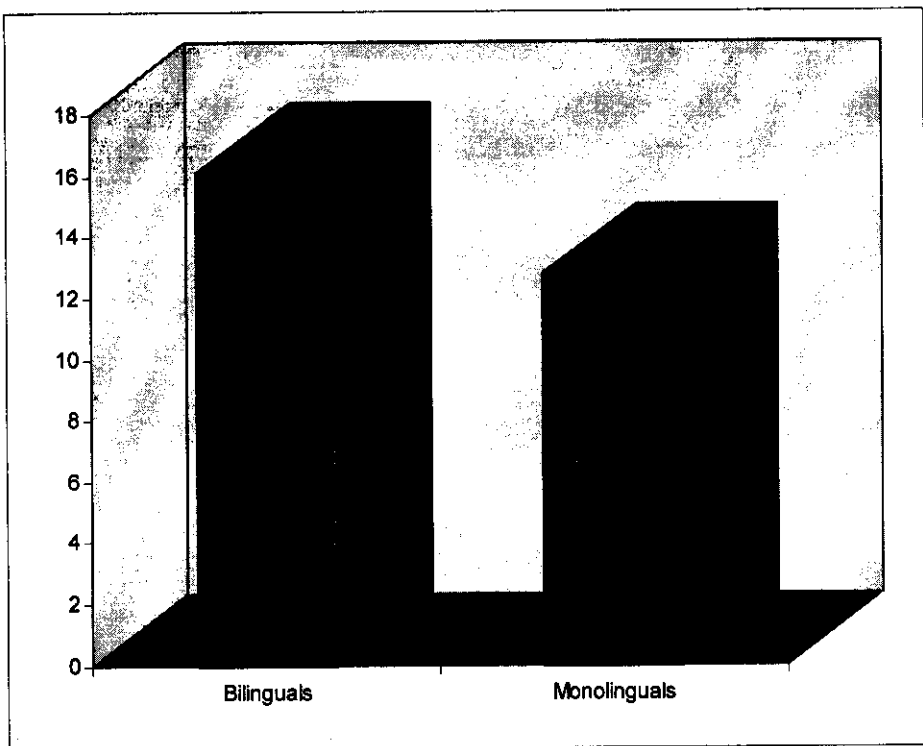
The difference between the bilinguals' and monolinguals' performances in translation test is illustrated in Figure 2. In contrast to monolinguals' mean ($\bar{X} = 12.15$), bilinguals mean ($\bar{X} = 15.70$) was much higher.

As Table 4 shows bilinguals again did better than their peer monolinguals on essay test.

Table 4. Means and standard deviations for Essay Writing Test

Group	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bilinguals	10	16.10	1.17
Monolinguals	10	12.75	1.18

This significant difference is illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3. Essay Writing Performance of Bilinguals & Monolinguals**

Conclusion

In sum on the basis of the findings of this paper it is concluded that through L3 learning bilinguals benefit more from their special L2 learning than monolinguals with the help of their better developed metalinguistic awareness and abilities. Meanwhile, since bilinguals have already learned the mechanisms of the second language learning, consequently they also profit more from the similarities in the cognates and use previous language knowledge in an efficient way while learning L3. Accordingly our prediction that bilinguals learn a third language in a different and more efficient way than their peer monolinguals is confirmed and this is reflected in the learners' written performance.

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دو زبانی و فراگیری زبان سوم

چکیده فارسی :

مقاله حاضر کنش زبانی دوزبانه های آذری زبان و تک زبانه های فارسی زبان را در فرایند یادگیری زبان سوم مورد بررسی قرار می دهد. پژوهش های موجود درباره توانایی های فرازبانی و شناختی زبان آموزان کودک حاکی از این است که دو زبانه ها با توجه به کسب تجارب قبلی در یادگیری زبان دوم، در فراگیری زبان سوم موفق تر بوده و کنش زبانی آنها متفاوت تر از تک زبانه ها خواهد بود. در این تحقیق کنش زبانی دو گروه ده نفری از دو زبانه های آذری زبان و تک زبانه های فارسی زبان پس از آموزش های لازم مورد بررسی قرار گرفته است. نتایج بدست آمده و تجزیه و تحلیل آماری داده ها نشان می دهد که دو زبانه ها به کمک آگاهی های فرازبانی و تجارب قبلی و با استفاده از تشابهات و تفاوت های بین دو زبان، در فراگیری زبان سوم موفق تر هستند.