

The Effects of Bilingualism on Non-Linguistic Cognition

Jennifer Mattsচেy

The Effects of Bilingualism on Non-Linguistic Cognition

A Historic Perspective

palgrave
macmillan

Jennifer Mattschesy
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
The Open University
Milton Keynes, UK

ISBN 978-3-031-34680-4 ISBN 978-3-031-34681-1 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-34681-1>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2023

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use. The publisher, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: Pattern © Harvey Loake

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

PREFACE

Historically, bilingualism has been linked to such undesirable terms as “mental retardation” and “mental confusion”. Much of this early research used unreliable methods to test if bilingualism affects intelligence, at times influenced by eugenics theories. This early research coined the term “Bilingual Problem”, yet the supposed problem of bilingualism was later found to be the result of poor control for confounding variables (e.g. socio-economic background) and inappropriate choices of intelligence tests to compare bilinguals and monolinguals. These days, we know that the ability to speak more than one language has no negative effects on intelligence—in fact, it appears to enhance executive functioning. But does it really? Recent research suggests that findings that point towards an executive functioning advantage for bilinguals have been as much affected by poor control of confounding variables and sub-optimal use of available tests as early research on intelligence. In fact, there is strong evidence to suggest that there is no difference between bilinguals and monolinguals after all. Are we reluctant to let go of the idea of a bilingual advantage because of the history of research on the effects of bilingualism on non-linguistic cognition?

Milton Keynes, UK

Jennifer Mattschesy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book would not exist if my husband, tired of my complaints that such a book does not already exist, had not encouraged me to go ahead and submit the proposal for it to Palgrave. I have to thank both him and my editor, Beth Farrow, for giving me the opportunity to write it. Additionally, I would like to thank my reviewers for their insightful and constructive comments.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
1.1	<i>Suppressed Languages and Education</i>	3
1.2	<i>Who Is Bilingual and Who Is Monolingual?</i>	5
1.3	<i>Unimodal and Bimodal Bilingualism</i>	13
1.4	<i>The Bilingual Mind</i>	15
1.5	<i>Summary of Bilingualism</i>	20
	<i>References</i>	20
2	Bilingual Education in the Early Twentieth Century	27
2.1	<i>Early Bilingual Education Reports</i>	27
2.2	<i>Early Case Studies of Bilingual Children</i>	33
	<i>References</i>	34
3	The Bilingual Problem	37
3.1	<i>The Bilingual Problem</i>	37
3.2	<i>Early Intelligence Tests</i>	40
3.3	<i>Late 1920s and 1930s</i>	47
	<i>References</i>	51
4	Mid-Twentieth Century: Bilingualism and Intelligence	55
4.1	<i>1940s</i>	55
4.2	<i>1950s</i>	56
4.3	<i>1960s</i>	59
	<i>References</i>	66

5	Late Twentieth Century: Meta-Linguistics	69
5.1	<i>1970s</i>	69
5.2	<i>1980s</i>	71
5.3	<i>1990s</i>	74
	<i>References</i>	77
6	The Bilingual Advantage	81
6.1	<i>The Bilingual Advantage</i>	81
6.2	<i>Confirmatory Bias and Selective Reporting</i>	84
6.3	<i>Bilingualism and Dementia</i>	92
6.4	<i>To Match Groups or Not Match Groups</i>	94
6.4.1	<i>Immigration</i>	94
6.4.2	<i>Socio-economic Status</i>	98
6.4.3	<i>Types of Bilingualism</i>	104
6.5	<i>Further Considerations: Could We Control for All Potentially Confounding Variables?</i>	106
	<i>References</i>	108
7	Is Bilingualism Good or Bad?	119
7.1	<i>The Same Old Question?</i>	120
7.2	<i>Theoretical Frameworks</i>	122
7.3	<i>Looking Ahead</i>	123
	<i>References</i>	125
	Index	129