

## COGNITIVE, ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL BENEFITS OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION

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**Abstract:**Bilingual education is an education which instructs students in two languages. It is designed to teach students in both their native language and a chosen second language in academic content and develop their proficiency in both languages equally. There were always many doubts about effectiveness of bilingual education. However, during the years, results of studies have been proving that it has several advantages in fact. This paper is devoted to discuss three major benefits of bilingual education: cognitive skills, better academic performance and cultural understanding.

**Key words:**Bilingualism, executive abilities, cognitive control, higher academic performance, inarticulate, cultural awareness, adjustable.

### Introduction

In today's fast-paced world, being able to communicate in more than one language is considered as one of essential skills for people in order to achieve success in their both social and academic fields. As connection among communities around the world is becoming increasingly interconnected, the demand for teaching methods that could meet students' linguistic needs has emerged. In consequence of this demand, bilingual education - an alternative option to monolingual instruction -was developed. Bilingual education is a school program in which two languages are used in the curriculum due to teach. (Ellen Bialystok,2018). The goal of this educational model is not only developing proficiency in both languages but also enhancing learners' academic knowledge in different subjects, for example, math, science and social studies at the same time. The interest towards the influence of bilingualism is constantly growing. Although it has become an educational option in many countries for more than 50 years, it remains contentious.

### Main part

There has been an increasing controversy on whether bilingualism may influence general executive abilities or not (e.g., Paap & Greenberg, 2013). However, a number of studies reported that bilingual context has positive impact on enhancing cognitive abilities, such as cognitive control and problem-solving skills. Knowing two or more languages means that your brain works flexibly and actually look and work differently than those of your monolingual peers. This is because, when individuals are learning new languages, they train their brains to switch between languages. It means that learning two languages requires students to keep languages separate, concentrate on them and reject distractions, and control them in mixed language

context, choosing appropriate grammar structures and words. This makes stronger particular areas of brain which are associated with cognitive control. **The process of switching between languages and applying them to different academic subjects encourages students to approach problems from multiple perspectives (Johnson Eniola and Barnabas West, 2023).** Several researchers also have reported that bilinguals achieve better results than monolinguals on a number of tests based on cognitive control and problem-solving skills (Christoffels, I.K.; Steenbergen, L.; van den Wildenberg, W.P.M.; Colzato, L.S., 2015).

There was a belief that usage of two language in education might slow down students' learning process and lead them to become inarticulate in both languages. However, after carrying out extensive researches into bilingual programs, it has been revealed that along with better cognitive skills, it can often cause higher academic performance. Enhanced cognitive skills make students better at analyzing information which enables them to comprehend more deeply even very complex concepts. An experiment conducted by Johnson (2020) demonstrated that students participating in bilingual education programs outperformed their monolingual peers in various academic fields, including reading comprehension, writing, science, math, and problem-solving tests. This suggests that bilingualism is not aimed to support only language acquisition, but also contribute to overall intellectual development.

In addition to better cognitive and academic performance, bilingual education also enables students to improve cultural awareness and appreciation (**Johnson Eniola and Barnabas West, 2023**). A study conducted by Lee (2019) found that bilinguals are more collaborative and open-minded towards different cultures. The main reason is that when people start to learn and use second language, they also begin to obtain information about culture, traditions and views of people of that language and understanding cultural contexts and traditions broadens their horizon, helps them build respect for diversity and develops empathy in them. This cultural awareness prepares students to negotiate easily and be adjustable in today's multicultural world (**Johnson Eniola and Barnabas West, 2023**).

### Conclusion

Bilingual education offers numerous benefits that are far more than just the acquisition of multiple languages (**Johnson Eniola and Barnabas West, 2023**). Bilingual education is a powerful tool that helps to improve students' cognitive abilities, academic success, and cultural awareness. Even though some have argued about its effectiveness, extensive researches have already proved that bilingual learners develop stronger executive functions, perform better academically, and gain a deeper understanding of various cultures. These advantages prepare students to navigate an increasingly interconnected world with confidence and adaptability. Given these benefits, bilingual education should be recognized as a superior alternative to monolingual instruction, providing learners with essential skills for both academic and personal growth in today's globalized society.

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