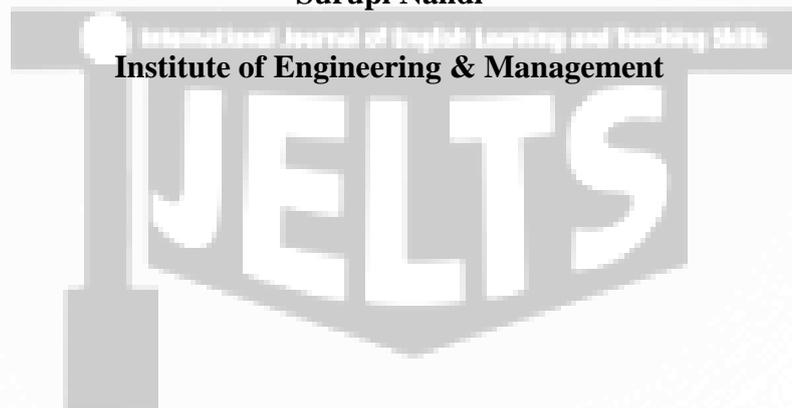


Bilingualism & Multilingualism: A New Perspective to Language Learning

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Abstract

As perception begins to increase in a child, early language acquisition seems much like a natural process. From broken sounds to fumbling words, and then to sentences, a kid finally learns how to express his thoughts and emotions. With time, curiosity grows and a person stumbles upon new languages around him. As he starts exploring the world around him, he realizes that he is not only becoming proficient at another language but is also starting to learn about various other cultures. Globalization has played a major part in connecting people across the world. Before globalization, the exchange of language, culture, education, facilities, and thoughts in general, were never so prevalent. With Globalization at full speed, multilingualism has made a huge impact on a person's well-being. Multilingual people tend to be more open to what the world has to offer. They tend to have a more positive outlook of their surroundings, are free from prejudices, and are able to accept people, culture, and traditions as beautiful happenings on earth.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Bilingualism, Language, Language Studies

Early Sounds: Melody in a Native Language

To a newborn baby, the sound is a completely new dimension. The first time it hears a sound, is when native language acquisition starts. Native language is usually referred to as the language that the baby's parents or guardians speak in front of it. Slowly with time, the infant learns to pronounce sounds of various kinds. Then it starts forming a sound that forms a logical word, and then a group of logical words forming a logical sentence. This process of communicating eventually leads up to the baby expressing its thoughts and emotions through language.

The first-ever language that a kid learns is usually the language spoken at home or in his surroundings (B.Berner). A child becomes proficient at a language, by not only understanding what is being said to him, but also by being somewhat capable of responding to it. Interacting with a person that is fluent in a language is the best way to acquire that language.

Nature Vs. Nurture

Nature versus nurture is a topic that has hugely been debated for many years. In even this case, beyond the innate nature of humans and their capacity to learn new languages and being able to comfortably switch over from one to another, social factors also play a pivotal role in language development. In places where widely spoken languages such as English, Hindi are used to communicate with the outside world, a practice such as speaking only native languages at home is important. This not only protects the native language from going extinct, but also gives the sense of cohesiveness within the people of the same culture, speaking the same language.

Bilingualism & Formal Education

After becoming somewhat accustomed to one language, one tends to learn another. This might be because of multiple different reasons such as, becoming a part of a new community, learning a common language that can help one communicate with anyone across the country, marriage with the person who speaks another language, or just the general curiosity of what it's like to learn some new

sounding words. Being a bilingual person means knowing two languages fluently. Reading, writing, and communicating effectively in both of those languages must come to him effortlessly (Bhatia T., 2017).

Globalization

Somewhere in the late 1400s, when people started traveling to places outside their native country for trade and exploration, globalization had begun. People flocked in from different countries in order to discover new food, music, architecture, education, and culture. Globalization became one of the major factors that helped shape the world as we see it today. Without this, countries would have stayed separated by their natural barriers such as seas and mountains, and there would be no contact with people from all around the world. It was at this time that the trade of spices, cotton, silk, and slaves started, then from there, it took off to multiple dimensions that were yet to be discovered. There are many aspects to globalization, one of them being the reason for such dense connectivity within people from different parts of the world today, and the other being the reason that many countries got enslaved by others due to lack of ammunition and fighting material. Both good and bad, none of that would have been possible without learning the language of the natives and foreigners.

As globalization has increased awareness about linguistic diversity, questions concerning bilingualism and multilingualism have taken on increasing importance from both practical and scholarly points of view. While there is a vast amount of information pertaining to research on bilingual and multilingual individuals and communities there is little information that deals with its methodology systematically and coherently.

Multilingualism

The education system has been evolving ever so dynamically over these past years, and language studies are becoming a very essential part of it. "Today there are about 6,500 different natural languages. Eleven of them account for the speech of more than half the world's population.

Those eleven are Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, Hindi, French, Bengali, Portuguese, Russian, German, Japanese, Arabic, and English” (Delhumeau, H. (2011, August 13).

Talking about the English language, it’s one of the most commonly spoken languages in the world. English is the language of the Internet, a thing that has now become an integrated part of everyday life. Traveling anywhere in the world becomes easier if one can speak basic English, as it provides a person with a huge variety of opportunities.

However, taking a wider look, people nowadays are getting more accustomed to multiple languages. This helps them to be more versatile wherever they go. When people can speak more than one language, they are called multilingual. Bilingualism is a special case of multilingualism. As language has no barriers, one may learn as many languages as they would desire. This will allow them to not only efficiently communicate wherever they go but will also open up many more opportunities as they interact with people from all around the world. Ziad Fazah from Brazil claims to know 59 world languages and is the world’s greatest polyglot. A polyglot is a person who knows more than five languages (Chief E, 2017).

In today's world of social media, people of all ages, gender, and nationality, tend to have not only one but multiple identities and to fuel these identities the people tend to be multidimensional. As technology is becoming more and more advanced, learning multiple languages is becoming normalized. In countries such as India, Africa, and more, being bilingual or multilingual is seen to be a very common thing, because, in these places, multiple different languages are being spoken simultaneously within the country. Traveling from one state to another makes it essential to acquire new languages, to be able to communicate better. On the contrary, in earlier days, being multilingual in monolingualistic countries such as the US, Japan, China was not the norm. However, as globalization took off, people started learning new languages so that they can communicate better with people going in and out of the country. This also hugely boosted trade among several nations in the world.

Ground Reality

Multilingualism, a blessing or a curse? There are many negative aspects to this as well. There might be a lack of skilled educators in the community. It requires a complete immersion in the language for it to be effectively learned. Studying new languages can shift the focus of a student from their academic courses. Parents use the second language to communicate with their kids when they have made a mistake. The phone has a hard time understanding what it is being given when the person mixes up multiple languages together.

However, that is only one side of the story, there are many perks of being multilingual as well. The person is not in the minority anymore. The benefits of multilingualism can be passed onto future generations. Multilingual people tend to be more open-minded than monolingual individuals, as one has experienced a lot about several different cultures. They can connect to others at a much more personal level because of their language skills. Being multilingual also brings about a lot of health benefits. One of them is that the brain gets many positive cognitive benefits while getting accustomed to multiple languages at a time. Being multilingual allows for individual wisdom to develop. Multilingualism improves a person's working memory (Chief E.,2019). It creates an opportunity for early diversity. There are more career prospects available to people because of them being multilingual.

Conclusion

Early language acquisition seems much like the natural process through which a kid learns how to convey his preferences and to others. This is the time when a kid becomes capable of communicating and interacting with people around him, it is at this time his perception of the world begins to strengthen. This is one of the major milestones that happen in one's life which turns one into a social being. Confident with one language a person starts discovering new languages around him which leads to a phenomenon called multilingualism. Knowing how to communicate in more than two languages gives one immense power to communicate with various people that he

encounters. This further helps him in developing a better family and career. It is not only about the language that one learns, it is also about the culture that one adapts to while learning the new languages. As a result, this helps one break down his prejudices and biases against people of different nationalities and backgrounds. It makes them open-minded and helps them accept and learn from others. None of this would have been possible if globalization hadn't started. Thanks to it, now people are connected by various languages from all across the world, it is no longer just about trade, it has now expanded into an exchange of language, culture, education, facilities, and thoughts in general.

It is not that simple learning multiple languages, however, if one masters this art then one can have conversations that can connect them with others on a personal level, leading to a very meaningful exchange of thoughts and emotions. This world offers a plethora of different varieties of languages, here bilingualism or multilingualism is a skill that once learned, will surely put one on a road to success.

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