



MULTILINGUAL ADVANTAGE IN ENGLISH SKILL DISTRIBUTION: EVIDENCE FROM GRADE 8 STUDENTS AT PRESIDENTIAL SCHOOL IN GULISTAN

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Abstract: *This study investigates the distribution of English language skills among bilingual and multilingual Grade 8 students at Presidential School in Gulistan, Uzbekistan. The analysis is based on IELTS-style mock test results across four core language skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. A total of 23 students participated in the study and were categorized into three groups according to their linguistic background: bilingual learners, sequential multilingual learners, and simultaneous multilingual learners.*

The findings indicate that multilingual learners demonstrate slightly higher average performance across several skills, particularly in listening and speaking. Sequential multilingual students achieved the highest scores in receptive and oral skills, suggesting potential advantages in auditory processing and spoken communication. In contrast, simultaneous multilingual learners showed relatively stronger performance in writing, which may reflect greater metalinguistic awareness and flexibility in language use.

Overall, the results suggest that multilingual experience may contribute to enhanced linguistic flexibility and more balanced skill development in English language learning. However, the differences between groups were not substantial, indicating that multilingualism alone does not determine language proficiency outcomes.

Due to the limited sample size and the use of a single assessment instrument, the findings should be interpreted with caution and cannot be generalized to broader populations. Future research should include larger and more diverse samples, apply inferential statistical analysis, and consider additional variables such as motivation,



instructional quality, and language exposure to better understand the relationship between multilingualism and language performance.

Keywords: *bilingualism; multilingualism; sequential multilingualism; simultaneous multilingualism; English proficiency; skill distribution; IELTS-based assessment; secondary education*

Introduction

Multilingualism has become a defining characteristic of modern educational environments, where learners frequently use multiple languages in both academic and social contexts. Increasing attention has been given to the potential cognitive and linguistic advantages associated with bilingual and multilingual language use.

Previous research suggests that managing multiple linguistic systems may enhance metalinguistic awareness, cognitive flexibility, and cross-linguistic transfer. These factors may influence how learners develop different language skills, particularly in foreign language acquisition.

In Uzbekistan, many students grow up in multilingual environments, typically using Uzbek as a first language while acquiring Russian and English. This context provides a valuable opportunity to examine how language background affects English language performance.

This study aims to analyze IELTS-style mock test results of Grade 8 students and compare bilingual and multilingual learners across four skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

The study addresses the following research questions:
Do multilingual students demonstrate stronger performance than bilingual students?
Are there differences between sequential and simultaneous multilingual learners?
Which language skills show the greatest variation across groups?

Literature Review

Research on bilingualism and multilingualism has consistently highlighted cognitive and linguistic advantages associated with managing multiple languages. However, the extent to which these advantages influence specific language skills remains an area of ongoing investigation.



Bialystok (2001, 2017) argues that bilingual individuals develop enhanced executive control due to constant language management. While this advantage is well documented, its direct impact on specific language skills such as listening and speaking requires further empirical evidence.

Cummins (1979) proposes the Interdependence Hypothesis, suggesting that literacy skills transfer across languages through a shared underlying proficiency. Although this theory explains strong reading performance in bilingual learners, it does not fully account for variation in productive skills.

From a multilingual perspective, Li Wei (2018) introduces translanguaging as a dynamic process in which learners utilize their entire linguistic repertoire. This framework provides a useful explanation for flexibility in writing and speaking; however, empirical classroom-based evidence remains limited.

Similarly, Grosjean (2010) emphasizes the integrated nature of bilingual language use, while Jessner (2008) highlights the role of metalinguistic awareness in multilingual development.

Despite these contributions, previous studies have rarely examined skill-specific performance differences among bilingual and multilingual secondary school students in real classroom contexts. This study aims to address this gap by providing empirical evidence from an Uzbek educational setting.

Methodology

The study involved 23 Grade 8 students aged 14–15 from Presidential School in Gulistan. Participants were divided into three groups based on language background: bilingual (Uzbek and English), sequential multilingual (Uzbek with later acquisition of Russian and English), and simultaneous multilingual (Uzbek, Russian, and English from early childhood).

Data were collected using an IELTS-style mock examination assessing four skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Scores were reported using IELTS band descriptors.

Descriptive statistical analysis was used to calculate mean scores for each group across the four skills. Comparisons were made between groups to identify



patterns of variation in performance. Due to the small sample size, no inferential statistical tests were applied, and the findings are interpreted as indicative trends rather than generalizable results.

The study is limited by its small sample size and reliance on a single assessment. Future studies should include larger samples and multiple testing instruments to improve reliability and validity.

Results

The results indicate that the majority of students achieved relatively high levels of English proficiency, with approximately 74% scoring Band 6.5 or higher.

Multilingual learners demonstrated higher average scores across most skills compared to bilingual learners. Sequential multilingual students achieved the highest performance in listening (8.50) and speaking (6.75), suggesting potential advantages in auditory processing and oral communication.

Simultaneous multilingual learners showed slightly stronger performance in writing (6.20), which may reflect greater metalinguistic awareness and flexibility in language use.

However, differences between groups were not substantial, indicating that multilingualism alone does not determine language performance.

Discussion

The findings support existing research suggesting that multilingual experience may contribute to skill-specific advantages. The strong performance of sequential multilingual learners in listening and speaking aligns with Bialystok's (2001, 2017) theory of enhanced attentional control.

Consistently strong reading performance across groups supports Cummins's (1979) Interdependence Hypothesis, indicating cross-linguistic transfer of literacy skills.

The relatively higher writing performance among simultaneous multilingual learners may be explained by Li Wei's (2018) concept of translanguaging, which emphasizes flexible use of linguistic resources.



At the same time, the limited differences between groups suggest that other factors, such as teaching quality, motivation, and individual learner differences, play a significant role in language development.

Conclusion

This study examined English language skill distribution among bilingual and multilingual Grade 8 students. The findings indicate that multilingual learners demonstrate slightly higher performance across several skills, particularly in listening and speaking.

Sequential multilingual learners showed the strongest performance in receptive and oral skills, while simultaneous multilingual learners performed better in writing.

Although the results suggest a potential advantage of multilingualism, the small sample size limits generalizability. Future research should explore larger populations and investigate additional factors influencing language acquisition.

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