



## THE THEORY OF BILINGUALISM IN THE ASPECT OF NEUROLINGUISTICS

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### Annotation

This article is devoted to know all about where can be bilingualism be found, positive and negative sides of bilingualism, theories of bilingualism and the necessary is to know what is bilingualism.

**Keywords:** bilingualism, the theory of bilingualism, benefits of being bilingual, negative side

### What exactly is bilingualism?

The definition seems to be easy at first sight, but when we take a closer look, it becomes obvious that the definition of bilingualism is far more complicated and complex. The first answer to this question would be that a child has been brought up with two languages in which it is equally competent and that the use of both languages is perfect. Yet, the ability to communicate in two languages is individually different. Bilingualism means at first that the person is able to communicate in both languages and to apply the code-switching in adequate situations; this includes speaking and understanding as well as reading and writing. This is defined as the ability to articulate correctly, the use of adequate words in number and meaning and the knowledge of building correct words and phrases. The second level the correct way of using the language as a communicational means and also the ability to decide which language is the suitable one in which situation. The third level is the lingual-cognitive competence which which means at first the ability to understand the meaning of language concerning words and meanings. Three lives combined are called biliteracy. (Kipelikilinc, Nicola/ Ringler, Maria, 2007, p.29)





Bilingualism is the ability to use two languages. However, defining bilingualism is problematic since individuals with varying bilingual characteristics may be classified as bilingual. Definitions of bilingualism range from a minimal proficiency in two languages, to an advanced level of proficiency which allows the speaker to function and appear as a native-speaker of two languages. A person may describe themselves as bilingual but may mean only the ability to converse and communicate orally. Others may be proficient in reading in two or more languages. A person may be bilingual by virtue of having grown up learning and using two languages simultaneously. This is known as sequential bilingualism. To be bilingual means different things different people.

Where can be bilingualism found?

In many parts of the world, especially in Africa and Asia, many countries are bilingual and multilingual. In the Western part of the world many countries are seen as being monolingual countries even though many languages are spoken in the different countries. In many European countries and in the United States bilingualism is seen as being temporary and has to do with immigration. (Fromkin, Hyams and Rodman 2003: 374-375)

According to Romaine (1995: 23). 25 out of 36 countries in Europe were officially monolingual in 1995. However, in most of the countries there are minority languages. Some countries in Europe that have two or more official languages are Switzerland, Belgium, Finland and Greenland. Switzerland has four official languages, French, German, Italian, and Rhaeto-Romanic. This does not mean that all people know all of the languages. Some people are monolingual, some bilingual and even some are multilingual (Otterup 2005: 15).

Skutnabb-Kangas' definition of bilingualism.

As well as many other researches Skutnabb\_kangas (1981:93) has her own definition when it comes to bilingualism. Her definition is divided into four subfields and these cover several different aspects of bilingualism and that is why her definition is in focus in this essay.

All the definitions have to do with a person who:

- Has learned two languages from the beginning, in the family, be native speakers;
- Has been communicating in parallel with two languages from the beginning;
- Total controls two languages;
- Control two languages as a native speaker;
- Controls two languages equally good;
- Can produce significant utterances in their second language;
- Has at least some kind of control over the other languages' grammatical structure;





- Has been in contact with another language;
- Can use two languages in most situations;
- Identifies themselves as bilingual or with access to two cultures;
- Is identified by others as bilingual (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981:94);

Language is the system of sounds, words, grammar and rules used for communication, interaction, development of cultural knowledge, and creation of personal and social identity in a given speech community. (Skutnabb-Kangas and McCarty, 2006).

The goal of neurolinguistic study is to determine how language is organized and processed in the brain. Three bodies of research contribute to our current understanding of how the brain subserves bilingualism.

Nowadays, people speak and need more than language in order to be able to participate to the contemporary practices in all levels of society. As Baker (2011) states, Cummins (1976) and Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas were the first that developed the Thresholds Theory that basically explains the relationship between cognition and bilingualism and refers to those who have a certain level of foundation and competence in the two languages. The picture below is provided in order to easily understand the analysis of this theory.



Thresholds theory is basically explained by a picture of a house divided into three floors. Two thresholds are those that separate the floors. These thresholds are actually levels of competence and each level has consequences for a child. The level below the





first threshold represents those who are limited bilinguals meaning their proficiency in both languages is limited or inadequate for their age. The consequences for a child at this point may only be negative since s/he cannot deal with neither of the two languages. In the middle floor, there are those who have developed an age-appropriate proficiency on one of the two languages while competence in the other one remains limited. These children, who are partly bilinguals, may have some positive differences in cognition but not significant ones since they have not fully developed their proficiency in both languages. At the top level, there are those called balanced bilinguals who have age-appropriate competence in both languages. This means that they have many chances to experience the positive effects of bilinguals. Of course, the advantages of bilingualism depend on many factors, such as motivation, pressure from the environment of the child and levels of stress (ibid).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe that knowing bilingual languages improvement greatest opportunities. And both skills help communicate with countless people and enriching experiences. There are 88% of Canadians who also believe that a person who learns two or more languages makes them “better equipped to succeed in today’s global economy” (Lazaruk, 2007, p. 622). Literary and cultural relations between peoples are of a dialogical nature, and the dialogue of cultures involves the participation of more or less broad layers of cultural and linguistic communities. As intercultural and interlinguistic communication, bilingualism is formed in different forms depending on the level of knowledge of different languages, their level of distribution or the level of coverage of speakers, the state of their use, the attitude of the speaker. listening to them and a number of other factors. The phenomenon of bilingualism is the focus of many researchers. This phenomenon is ambiguous, in many respects it has not yet been studied, but at the same time it is actively forming in accordance with the rapidly changing conditions of life.

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