

THE IMPACT OF EARLY BILINGUALISM ON ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS

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Annotation: This article explores how early bilingualism influences learners' English speaking skills, focusing on pronunciation, fluency, and speaking confidence. Data were gathered from classroom observations, interviews, and a short speaking test involving early bilingual and monolingual Uzbek learners. Findings show that students exposed to two languages from an early age develop stronger phonological awareness, faster speech processing, and higher willingness to communicate. However, certain phonological transfer patterns remain visible. The study concludes that early bilingualism provides a cognitive and linguistic advantage in developing English speaking competence.

Keywords: early bilingualism, speaking skills, pronunciation, fluency, confidence.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada erta ikki tillilik o'quvchilarning ingliz tilida gapirish ko'nikmalariga ta'siri o'rganilgan, xususan talaffuz, ravonlik va nutqda ishonchlilik jihatlariga e'tibor qaratilgan. Ma'lumotlar dars kuzatuvlari, suhbatlar va qisqa og'zaki nutq testi orqali to'plangan bo'lib, unda erta ikki tilli va monolingval o'zbek o'quvchilar ishtirok etgan. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, erta ikki tilda gapiradigan o'quvchilar fonologik sezgirlik, nutqni tez qayta ishlash va muloqotga tayyorlik jihatidan ustun bo'lishadi. Shunga qaramay, ayrim fonologik ta'sirlar saqlanib qoladi. Tadqiqot erta ikki tillilikning ingliz tilida gapirish kompetensiyasini rivojlantirishda kognitiv va lingvistik afzalliklarni taqdim etishini ko'rsatadi.

Kalit so'zlar: erta ikki tillilik, gapirish ko'nikmasi, talaffuz, ravonlik, ishonchlilik.

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается влияние раннего билингвизма на навыки говорения учащихся на английском языке, с акцентом на произношение, беглость речи и уверенность при говорении. Данные были собраны с помощью наблюдений на уроках, интервью и короткого устного теста с участием ранних билингвальных и монолингвальных узбекских учеников. Результаты показывают, что учащиеся, с раннего возраста изучающие два языка, развивают более высокую фонологическую осведомлённость, быстрее обрабатывают речь и обладают большей готовностью к коммуникации. Тем не менее, некоторые проявления влияния первого языка остаются. Исследование делает вывод, что ранний билингвизм

обеспечивает когнитивное и языковое преимущество в развитии навыков говорения на английском языке.

Ключевые слова: *ранний билингвизм, навыки говорения, произношение, беглость речи, уверенность.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Early bilingualism refers to the acquisition of two languages during childhood, usually before the age of seven. Many Uzbek learners grow up with Uzbek and Russian exposure before learning English at school. Psycholinguistic research suggests that early bilingual experience strengthens attention control, metalinguistic awareness, and sound discrimination abilities, all of which are essential for successful speaking in a foreign language.

English speaking skills require accurate pronunciation, fluent production, and confidence in communication. This research examines how early bilingualism affects these components among young Uzbek learners acquiring English.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Early bilingualism has been widely explored in psycholinguistic research for its influence on children's cognitive and linguistic development. Bialystok (2012) notes that early bilinguals demonstrate more efficient discrimination of phonetic contrasts compared to monolingual learners, largely due to exposure to two sound systems from an early age[1]. Cummins (2001) highlights that bilingual children develop enhanced metalinguistic awareness, enabling them to analyze and manipulate linguistic structures more effectively, which facilitates learning additional languages[2]. Genesee (2006) also emphasizes that early bilingual exposure contributes to faster phonological processing and improved speech fluency[3]. However, Odlin (1989) points out that cross-linguistic transfer may still occur in bilingual learners, especially in pronunciation, where traces of the first language persist[4]. Despite these global findings, the impact of early bilingualism on English speaking skills among Uzbek learners remains underresearched, which justifies this study.

To address this gap, the study involved two groups of Uzbek schoolchildren. Forty early bilingual participants (Uzbek–Russian), aged 10–12, and a comparison group of 20 monolingual Uzbek learners of the same age were selected. Multiple instruments were employed to evaluate speaking skills comprehensively. A short speaking test was administered in which learners completed a one- to two-minute description task. Pronunciation accuracy was measured through word- and sentence-reading assessments. Classroom observations documented students' willingness to communicate and overall participation. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture learners' perceptions of their speaking ability and confidence.

Data collection was conducted during regular English lessons over a set period. Learners' performances on speaking and pronunciation tasks were scored using rubrics evaluating fluency, accuracy, and confidence. Quantitative scores were averaged and compared across bilingual and monolingual groups. Qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed thematically to identify patterns such as anxiety levels, communication readiness, and phonological challenges. By combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of how early bilingual experience influences English speaking development among Uzbek learners.

III. RESULTS

The study found that early bilingual learners demonstrated noticeably clearer pronunciation of English vowels and consonants compared to their monolingual peers. They were able to distinguish phonetic contrasts more accurately and generally produced stress and intonation patterns correctly. In contrast, monolingual learners showed difficulties with certain sounds such as /θ/ and /ð/, and often misapplied word stress and rhythm.

In terms of fluency, bilingual students spoke more smoothly and at a faster pace, hesitating less and using fewer filler words. Their transitions between phrases were seamless, and overall fluency scores were approximately 20% higher than those of the monolingual group.

Observations and interview data also revealed that early bilingual learners exhibited higher speaking confidence. They volunteered more frequently in class, participated actively in discussions, and displayed lower levels of speaking anxiety. Monolingual learners, on the other hand, tended to be more hesitant and cautious, showing less spontaneous participation in oral activities.

Overall, these results suggest that early bilingualism has a positive impact on English speaking skills. Bilingual learners outperformed monolinguals in pronunciation, fluency, and confidence, although some influence of the first language on pronunciation remained visible.

IV. DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that early bilingualism provides a basis for the development of English speaking skills. Learners who have been exposed to two languages since childhood appear to navigate new sound systems with greater ease, largely because their phonological awareness is already well developed. Regularly shifting between languages also seems to strengthen their cognitive flexibility, which in turn supports smoother and more fluent speech production. These tendencies correspond with Bialystok's (2011) claim that bilingual individuals benefit from enhanced executive

functioning and metalinguistic insight, enabling them to process linguistic information more efficiently and manage multiple language structures at once[5].

The higher level of speaking confidence observed among bilingual participants may be interpreted in several ways. Early exposure to linguistic diversity may reduce anxiety when communicating, while repeated experience with language switching may contribute to a stronger sense of linguistic self-efficacy. At the same time, the data show that traces of first-language influence—particularly from Uzbek or Russian—still appear in learners' pronunciation. This suggests that although bilingualism provides meaningful advantages, it does not completely remove the phonological challenges associated with learning English. Rather, it creates conditions that help learners progress more rapidly and communicate more comfortably, even if some aspects of pronunciation continue to reflect the influence of their first language.

V. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that early bilingualism positively affects English speaking skills among young learners. Early bilingual students show advantages in pronunciation, fluency, and confidence, although certain L1-based errors remain. These results suggest that English teaching practices can benefit from integrating bilingual approaches, especially through phonological training and communicative activities.

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