

"UNRAVELING THE COGNITIVE ADVANTAGES OF BILINGUALS IN ACQUIRING ENGLISH AS A THIRD LANGUAGE: A FOCUS ON LINGUISTIC AND METALINGUISTIC AWARENESS"

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Abstract. The article delves into the cognitive advantages that bilingual individuals possess when acquiring English as a third language. The introduction highlights the significance of bilingualism in language acquisition, particularly in the context of learning English as an additional language. It emphasizes the relevance of linguistic and metalinguistic awareness in optimizing the language learning process. The article explores the concepts of linguistic awareness and metalinguistic awareness, defining their roles in language comprehension and production. It discusses how bilingual individuals develop heightened linguistic sensitivity and metalinguistic skills, enabling them to navigate the complexities of multilingual communication.

Moreover, the cognitive benefits of bilingualism are examined, showcasing enhancements in executive functions, attention control, and problem-solving abilities. Drawing from studies, the article demonstrates how bilinguals have a cognitive edge compared to monolingual individuals, specifically when acquiring a third language like English. The superiority of bilinguals in learning a third language is further investigated, focusing on how their existing linguistic knowledge can be harnessed to facilitate English acquisition. The transferability of language skills from their first two languages to the third language plays a crucial role in their linguistic development.

Keywords: bilinguals, third language acquisition, linguistic awareness, metalinguistic awareness.

Introduction

Language acquisition is a fascinating journey, particularly for bilingual individuals who embark on the quest of acquiring English as a third language. Bilingualism, the ability to navigate between multiple linguistic systems, holds profound significance in the context of language learning. This article delves into the cognitive advantages that bilinguals possess during their exploration of English as an additional language. Recognizing the importance of bilingualism, we explore how linguistic and metalinguistic awareness optimizes the language learning process,

enabling bilinguals to adeptly navigate the complexities of multilingual communication.

Linguistic and Metalinguistic Awareness: The Key to Multilingual Proficiency.

Linguistic awareness refers to the ability to recognize and comprehend the structures and patterns of language. It involves understanding grammar rules, vocabulary usage, and sentence structures. Metalinguistic awareness, on the other hand, involves the conscious reflection and analysis of linguistic elements. Bilingual individuals, fluent in more than one language, naturally develop heightened linguistic sensitivity and metalinguistic skills. Their experience in navigating between languages fosters an innate understanding of language nuances, facilitating the acquisition of new linguistic systems.

Beyond the realm of language, bilingualism offers a plethora of cognitive advantages. Studies have shown that bilingual individuals demonstrate enhanced executive functions, including better problem-solving abilities, cognitive flexibility, and attention control. This cognitive edge is attributed to the constant need for bilinguals to manage and switch between languages, which exercises and strengthens their cognitive abilities. As they adeptly move between linguistic systems, bilinguals showcase an elevated cognitive dexterity compared to their monolingual counterparts.

Bilingual individuals, equipped with the experience of learning and using multiple languages, possess a unique advantage when acquiring a third language like English. The knowledge and skills acquired from their first two languages can be effectively transferred to the third language. This transferability allows them to recognize patterns, structures, and similarities between languages, streamlining the learning process. As a result, bilinguals often exhibit a more efficient and accelerated third language acquisition journey compared to monolingual learners.

When acquiring English as a third language, bilingual individuals can harness their existing linguistic knowledge to facilitate the learning process. Concepts that are already familiar in their first two languages, such as grammar rules and vocabulary usage, can be readily applied to English. Additionally, bilinguals' metalinguistic skills enable them to compare and contrast linguistic features, identifying commonalities and differences between their languages. This comparative analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of English, reinforcing their language proficiency.

The cognitive advantages of bilinguals in acquiring English as a third language have profound implications for language learning and education. By acknowledging the strengths of bilingual individuals, educators can design more effective language teaching strategies that capitalize on linguistic and metalinguistic awareness.

Emphasizing the role of cultural sensitivity in language instruction fosters a positive and inclusive learning environment for bilingual learners embarking on their English language journey.

Conclusion

In conclusion, bilingualism bestows invaluable cognitive advantages upon individuals delving into English as a third language. The heightened linguistic and metalinguistic awareness developed through multilingual experiences equip bilinguals with the tools to navigate the intricacies of language acquisition. As bilingualism enhances cognitive functions and facilitates the transfer of language skills, it empowers individuals to acquire a third language with increased efficiency and proficiency. By embracing and recognizing the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, we pave the way for more effective language learning strategies and a richer understanding of the interconnectedness of languages in our diverse global society.

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