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## **THE BENEFITS OF BILINGUALISM: A COMPARATIVE PILOT STUDY ON THE PERFORMANCE OF BILINGUALS VERSUS MONOLINGUALS**

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**Summary.** The paper focuses on the differences and similarities in the performance of two groups of test takers taking the ECL (European Consortium for the Certificate of Attainment in Modern Languages) language exam – a proficiency-type of language exam – in Hungary and in neighbouring countries. The two groups under investigation include Hungarian test takers living in Romania, Slovakia and Serbia and native Hungarians between the ages of 14 and 19 living in Hungary. The research aims to identify whether bilingual test takers have an advantage when taking a language examination in a third language as compared to those who are monolingual. The study compares, contrasts and analyses the performance of these two distinct groups, one of which comes from a multilingual environment. It has been found out that the overall performance (achieved in each of the four components: listening, speaking, writing and reading) of bilingual test takers was significantly better than that of the monolinguals ( $p < 0.001$ ). Three tendencies have been identified with respect to the differences between the performance of the bilingual and monolingual test takers: first, there is a greater gap in relation to receptive skills - listening and reading – than in the case of the productive skills – speaking and writing; second, in the case of the receptive skills the gap decreases as the proficiency level increases; third, in the case of the speaking skill the gap increases as the proficiency level increases. Possible explanations are offered to explain these phenomena.

**Key words:** bilingualism, cross-linguistic influence, language testing, multilingualism.

### **Background**

In the beginning two things should be stated. First, studies on multilingual learners usually mention a positive association between bilingualism and third language achievement (Aronin & Hufeisen, 2009; Auer & Weii, 2007; De Angelis, 2007; De Zarobe & Catalan, 2009). However, several studies have pointed out that positive effects tend to emerge in additive language contexts where the first language continues to be developed and the first culture to be treasured while the second language is added (Cenoz, Hufeisen, & Jessner, 2001). Second, it is not bilingualism that affects third language learning, but bilingual literacy (Swain, Lapkin, Rowen, & Hart, 1990). Having seen that an additive language context may enhance learning a third language, let us now consider what effect the

knowledge of two languages might have on learners of foreign languages. Cross-linguistic influence can be defined as “the influence of the mother tongue on the learners’ performance in and/or development of a given target language; by extension, it also means the influence of any other tongue known to the learner on that target language” (Sharwood-Smith, 1994, p. 198). Multilingual learners are shaped by both their native and non-native languages. Such people have knowledge of more than two languages, meaning that the possible sources of influence increase with the languages the individual is familiar with. Empirical evidence suggests that transfer may occur from the mother tongue as well as from non-native languages. Transfer has also been found to occur from more than one language at the same time. This type of transfer, called combined cross-linguistic influence (interaction across these languages), has not been explored extensively (Auer & Wei, 2007).

Language transfer is most likely to occur between languages that are more closely related to one another. Evidence suggests that multilinguals are impacted by the language that is closest to the target language no matter whether it is their native tongue or not (De Angelis, 2007). This stance may be supported by Chandrasekhar’s base language hypothesis (Chandrasekhar, 1978) which states that learners rely on the language that most resembles the target language in production. In his seminal work, Vildomec (1963) mentions the recency factor. Vildomec notes that non-native language effect is more likely to occur from ‘vivid’ languages. Residence in a non-native language environment could have an impact on the amount and type of influence on a third or additional language. His claim has been further explored and supported (Williams & Hammarberg, 1998). Length of residence and exposure to a non-native language environment is strongly related to multilingualism. These two factors seem to increase multilinguals’ reliance on a particular source language in production. However, there is hardly any research investigating this issue.

Taking human cognition into consideration we know that learners rely on whatever they perceive as relevant to the task at hand. When discussing their Relevance theory, Wilson and Sperber (2004) explain that our perceptual mechanism automatically picks out potentially relevant stimuli, while our memory tends to activate potentially relevant assumptions. Talking about language acquisition, the most relevant piece of information is likely to be the command of

other languages already in the mind and the experiences learners consider when acquiring this knowledge.

Two critical questions emerge when talking about the effect of prior language knowledge on the language acquisition process. The first is how proficient one needs to be in the non-native language before the advantages of bilingualism or multilingualism may be realized. The second is whether the level of linguistic development we reach in a given language can be transferred to another language, affecting our performance in that language. Cummins suggested two hypotheses (1976, 1979) regarding the issue, the threshold hypothesis and the developmental interdependence hypothesis. According to the first, language learners must reach a certain level to avoid the cognitive disadvantages related to bilingualism and reach another one to enjoy its benefits. The developmental interdependence hypothesis proposes that our competence in the non-native language is partly dependent upon the competence we have achieved in our mother tongue, because the skills developed in our native language can be transferred to the second language. According to Lasagabaster (2001), this hypothesis also implies that if two languages can have an interdependent relationship with each other, the same may occur between a second and a third language. He also adds that if learners achieve a higher level of competence in the previous languages, such influence is more likely. Several studies have proved this position (see De Angelis, 2007).

According to Dewaele (2002), the phenomenon that bilinguals achieve a higher performance level when being tested in a third language may be attributed to the fact that because bilinguals have learned to use more languages they have become better in the field of communication, have a higher level of self-confidence and have increased their self-perceived competence. According to Bialystok (1988), bilinguals also have a higher level of attention control.

To sum it up, empirical evidence has made it clear that multilingual individuals are higher on the various scales discussed above and this feature can be used and drawn upon during the acquisition and production of a third language. Such knowledge is not available for monolinguals; however, it seems that this knowledge plays a more central role than previously thought.

There are seven billion people in the world speaking slightly fewer than 7.000 languages. It is estimated that between half and two-thirds of the world's

population are bilingual to some extent (Baker, 2006). There are 28 member states, 24 official languages, about 60 officially recognised regional or minority languages and three alphabets in the European Union (Europeans and Their Languages, 2012). In London, there are about 300 languages regularly spoken and 32% of the children living there use a language other than English at home. According to Eurostat (2010), 32 million people do not live in their home country in Europe and that is 6.4% of the continent's population. In quantitative terms, then, monolingualism can be regarded as the exception and multilingualism as the norm (Auer & Wei, 2007).

The European Union has declared many times that it sees multilingualism as an asset (Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment<sup>15</sup>). Several bodies of the European Union have expressed their interest and desire to maintain, what is more, to reinforce and promote the multilingual character of our continent. On page six of the European document mentioned above the following can be read: "there are areas in the EU where citizens successfully combine speaking a regional or minority language with the national language and score well in foreign languages, too. [...] they act as a glue between different cultures." As there are several terms used to characterise the various forms of bilingualism (ideal, partial, incipient, receptive, balanced, etc.), for the sake of clarity the term 'bilingual' is used here to refer to people who grew up in a bilingual environment acquiring their second language relatively early. Consequently, the term 'monolingual' will refer to people who learn their second language at school after they have already acquired their mother tongue.

### **Advantages of multilinguals**

To date there are many research studies that confirm the cognitive advantages of bilingualism. It has been found that bilingualism is a cognitive, social, emotional and educational advantage (Aronin & Hufeisen, 2009; Auer & Wei, 2007;

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<sup>15</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/languages/documents/2008\\_0566\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/languages/documents/2008_0566_en.pdf).

Baker, 2006; De Angelis, 2007; De Zarobe & Catalan, 2009). This positive view was first established by Peal and Lambert (1962).

Bilingual students show definite advantages over monolingual students in the following four cognitive or learning areas:

- divergent and creative thinking: bilinguals are more creative and flexible in their thinking (Ricciardelli, 1992).
- metalinguistic awareness: bilinguals demonstrate greater awareness of language and how it works (May, Hill, & Tiakiwai, 2004).
- communicative sensitivity (lower anxiety, stronger willingness to communicate, higher self-confidence, being less worried about mistakes, etc.): bilinguals are more sensitive to nuances in communication (May, Hill, & Tiakiwai, 2004).
- field independence: bilinguals are often able to orient themselves and detect hidden patterns and figures more easily (Bialystok, 1992).

Bialystok (1992) argues that what connects these skills together is the fact that bilingual people can perceive a situation or stimulus more analytically. They are able to focus on the key parts of a problem and select the essential parts of a solution. These skills are vital for both reading and listening comprehension. It seems that they can apply this analytical skill – attention control – to language, communication, thinking and visual perception. On the basis of these, bilingual learners have an advantage in divergent and creative thinking and analysis. "Early experience with two languages may lead [bilingual learners] to develop more sensitive means for controlling attention to linguistic input. They are used to hearing things referred to in two different ways" (Bialystok, 1992, p. 510).

There are also other advantages of bilingualism: bilinguals are able to communicate with a wider range of people within families and communities, across generations as well as in other social contexts. They can read and write in more than one language and this exposes them to new literatures, traditions, and ideas. Being exposed to two languages and cultures may foster greater tolerance for other groups of people. Speaking two languages makes it easier to learn additional languages. Being able to speak in two languages provides bilinguals with additional skills on the employment market – skills that are of great

importance in our globalised world (Aronin & Hufeisen, 2009; Auer & Wei, 2007; Baker, 2006; De Angelis, 2007; De Zarobe & Catalan, 2009). In conclusion there is a reason to believe that bilinguals do have some advantages when it comes to learning a third language. Consequently, the question that can be asked is whether this advantage has any impact on the performance of these people on a high stakes language exam.

## **The present study**

### **Aims**

Working for the ECL language examination centre, we have access to data on the performance of examinees who take the ECL exam in and outside of Hungary. The tendency has been noticed in the past few years that the test performance of examinees taking the exam outside of Hungary is better than that of the Hungarian test takers. We decided to look deeper into this issue, so our research aims at answering the following research questions:

- (1) Do bilingual test takers have an advantage when taking a language examination in a third language as compared to those who are monolingual?
- (2) In what areas of language skills can this advantage be observed?
- (3) Are there statistically significant differences in the performance of test takers?

The above statement about being able to successfully combine two languages can be verified by our research which examined the performance of mono- and bilingual test takers on ECL English language tests (levels B1, B2 and C1). The ECL Consortium is an association of institutions representing European languages. In 1992 the Consortium developed a uniform language test in several European languages. As the test materials are built on uniform principles the parameters and the criteria for evaluation and the type of tasks are the same in each language. The levels are related to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Szabó, 2010).

## Context and participants

The two groups of test takers under investigation include (1) Hungarians who took the test in Romania, Slovakia and Serbia and (2) native Hungarians aged 14 to 19 who live in Hungary. The ECL Language Examination System has exam sites in many European countries,<sup>16</sup> including the countries neighbouring Hungary. These centres, though not exclusively, can be found in regions that used to belong to Hungary before WWI and that still have a large Hungarian minority population (in Romania, Serbia and Slovakia). There are almost 1.3 million Hungarians living in Romania<sup>17</sup>, about 300 000 in Serbia<sup>18</sup> and about half a million in Slovakia<sup>19</sup>.

Regarding the test takers who took the exam outside of Hungary those have been selected who had Hungarian names and whose mother's name was also Hungarian (as their number is not extremely high, it was possible to filter the names from the database manually). On the basis of such information it is reasonable to assume that the vast majority of these test takers can be regarded bilingual, meaning that, besides Hungarian, they also speak the official language of their countries of residence. When someone applies to take an ECL language exam, their name, mother's name and address have to be provided. There is no rubric asking for their mother tongue, as this is a general practice in the case of language exams. Therefore, it was impossible to control this variable and state with certainty that these test takers are bilingual. However, as this is a pilot study it was decided to resort to this assumption. The majority of test takers from this group were between the ages of 15 and 25. From the group of native Hungarian test takers those were selected who were between the ages of 14 and 19 when they took the exam. In the Hungarian context, passing a language exam is of great importance for secondary school students. In Hungary every student starts studying a foreign language at a primary school and continues to study it at the

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.ecl.hu/pages/template2.aspx?id=6328>.

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.recensamantromania.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/sR\\_Tab\\_8.xls](http://www.recensamantromania.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/sR_Tab_8.xls).

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.osce.org/serbia/30908>.

<sup>19</sup> [http://portal.statistics.sk/files/Sekcie/sek\\_600/Demografia/SODB/Tabulky/Tabulky\\_AJ\\_SODB/tab11.pdf](http://portal.statistics.sk/files/Sekcie/sek_600/Demografia/SODB/Tabulky/Tabulky_AJ_SODB/tab11.pdf).

secondary level, where it is obligatory to learn an additional foreign language. However, with the exception of schools with a special language programme, they study this third language at a very low intensity. Consequently, in reality, they study one foreign language, because if they have a language certificate they can get admission to higher education more easily. Therefore, many teenagers take their first language exam while studying at a secondary school. On the basis of this, they can be regarded as monolinguals studying their first foreign language. In this study the performance of the bilingual test takers has been compared to that of monolingual test takers. During the time period under investigation, 481 people took these exams from the bilingual group and 12,721 from the monolingual group.

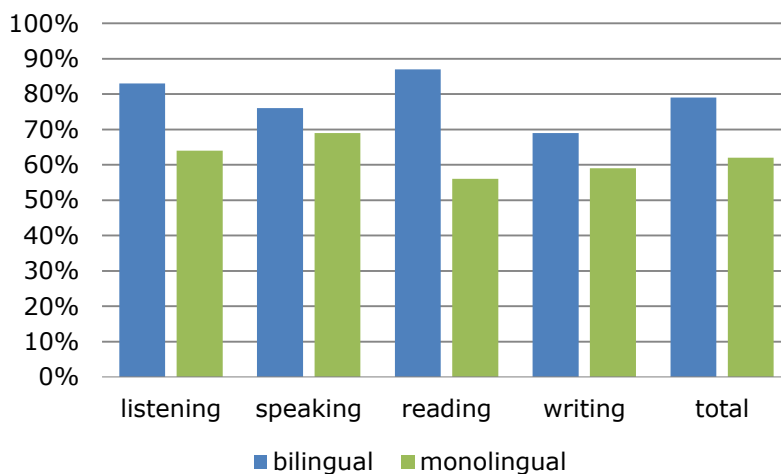
## **Data and procedures**

The scores the test takers achieve on the ECL test are recorded in the ECL database. Each candidate's scores are recorded for all the skills he or she takes on the test. Thus the scores a particular candidate achieved in each of the four components (listening, speaking, writing and reading) are available in the ECL database. The test performance of the above mentioned two groups in relation to English B1, B2 and C1 tests during a three-year period (2010–2012) was put under investigation. The performance of the two groups was analysed by comparing and contrasting their exam results. An independent-samples t-test was carried out and descriptive statistics were used to compare the means between these two unrelated groups (test-takers in and outside Hungary) on the same continuous, dependent variable (test performance, overall and separated by skills).



## Results

The results of the statistical analyses are shown in Figures 1–4 and Tables 1–4.



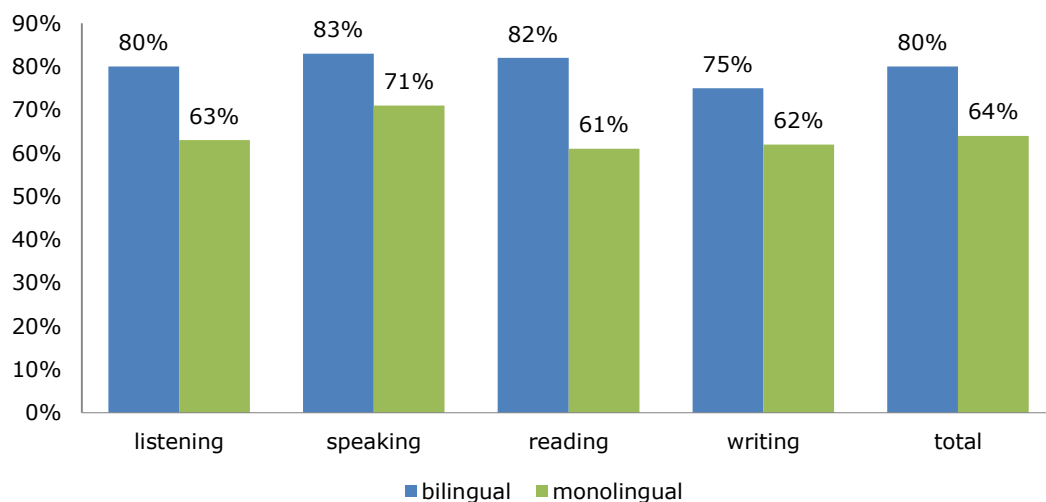
**Fig.1. Exam results of bilinguals and monolinguals at the ECL complex language exam, English, level B1, 2010–2012**

*Table 1.*

### Results of t-tests, level B1 (%)

Results of t-tests (B1)							
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean	t value	Sig. (2 tailed)
listening	bilingual	123	83.4%	13.3	1.2	10.6	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	191	63.5%	20.1	1.5		
speaking	bilingual	123	76.5%	11.3	1.0	4.2	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	191	69.4%	18.4	1.3		
reading	bilingual	123	86.8%	12.6	1.1	16.0	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	193	54.8%	22.8	1.6		
writing	bilingual	123	69.1%	12.7	1.1	5.6	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	192	60.0%	14.4	1.0		
total	bilingual	123	78.9%	8.1	0.7	12.4	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	189	62.4%	15.2	1.1		

The performance of the bilingual test takers on level B1 is significantly better than that of the monolingual candidates. The difference between the means is more than twice as much in the case of the receptive skills (*listening: 20% and reading: 32%*) as with the productive skills (*speaking: 7.1% and writing: 9.1%*).



**Fig. 2. Exam results of bilinguals and monolinguals at the ECL complex language exam, English, level B2, 2010–2012**

*Table 2.*

### Results of t-tests, level B2

Results of t-tests (B2)							
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean	t value	Sig. (2 tailed)
listening	bilingual	299	79.9%	14.1	0.8	21.3	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	8531	62.0%	19.6	0.2		
speaking	bilingual	299	83.2%	11.2	0.6	19.4	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	8502	70.2%	15.9	0.2		
reading	bilingual	299	81.7%	13.0	0.7	27.4	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	8535	60.2%	22.1	0.2		
writing	bilingual	299	75.4%	11.6	0.7	20.8	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	8538	61.2%	10.0	0.1		
total	bilingual	299	80.1%	8.1	0.5	33.9	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	8474	63.5%	13.2	0.1		

The performance of the bilingual test takers on level B2 is also significantly better than that of their monolingual peers. The differences between the means of the four skills, however, are not as big as it was on level B1 (*listening: 18%; speaking: 13%; reading: 21.5%; writing: 14.2%*), but it is statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ).

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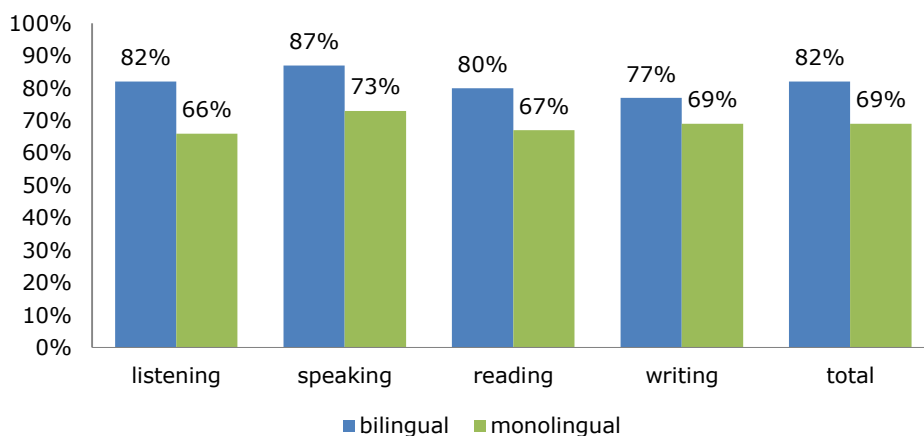


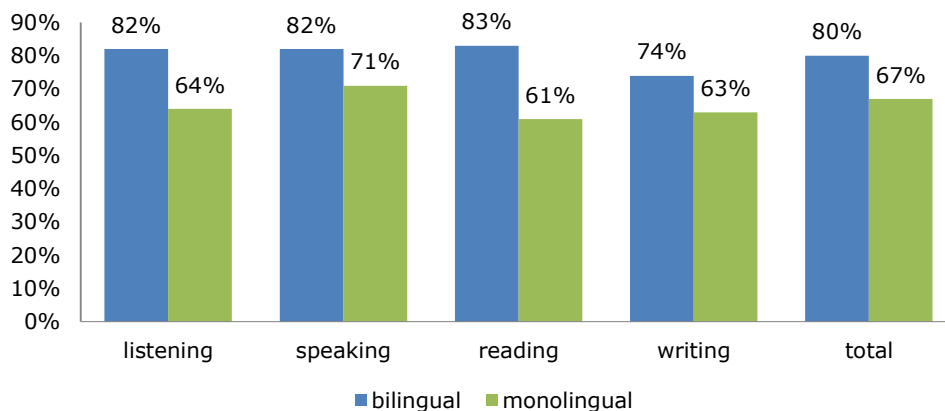
Fig. 3. **Exam results of bilinguals and monolinguals at the ECL complex language exam, English, level C1, 2010–2012**

Table 3.

**Results of t-tests, level C1**

Results of t-tests (C1)							
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t value	Sig. (2 tailed)
listening	bilingual	57	81.8%	13.2	1.8	8.8	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	3884	66.1%	18.0	0.3		
speaking	bilingual	57	86.9%	11.2	1.5	9.3	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	3868	72.9%	16.0	0.3		
reading	bilingual	57	80.4%	14.3	1.9	7.0	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	3889	67.0%	20.1	0.3		
writing	bilingual	57	77.1%	12.1	1.6	4.7	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	3889	69.5%	9.8	0.2		
total	bilingual	57	81.5%	8.6	1.1	10.9	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	3864	68.9%	11.4	0.2		

The performance of the bilingual test takers on level C1 is significantly better than that of the monolingual test takers. The differences between the means of the four skills are close to one another except writing, where the gap is smaller (*listening: 15.7%; speaking: 14%; reading: 13.4%; writing: 7.6%*).



**Fig. 4. Exam results of bilinguals and monolinguals at the ECL complex language exam, English, levels B1–C1, 2010–2012**

Table 4.

#### Results of t-tests, levels B1, B2 and C1

Results of t-tests (B1 + B2 + C1)							
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t value	Sig. (2 tailed)
listening	bilingual	479	81.0%	13.8	0.6	27.1	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	12606	63.3%	19.2	0.2		
speaking	bilingual	479	81.9%	11.7	0.5	19.7	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	12561	71.0%	16.0	0.1		
reading	bilingual	479	82.9%	13.2	0.6	32.6	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	12617	62.2%	21.8	0.2		
writing	bilingual	479	73.9%	12.3	0.6	17.9	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	12619	63.7%	10.8	0.1		
total	bilingual	479	79.9%	8.2	0.4	37.9	p < 0.001.
	monolingual	12527	65.2%	12.9	0.1		

There is a statistically significant difference between the overall performance (achieved in each of the four components: listening, speaking, writing and reading) of the bilingual test takers and that of the monolingual candidates ( $p < 0.001$ ). To compare the test results an independent-samples t-test was used. The reason why the difference is significant ( $p < 0.001$ .) in each case is the following: the difference between the means of the monolingual and bilingual test takers is relatively high (at least 7%, B1 speaking) compared to the standard deviation and the N number. It is important to note that the P value does not

depend on the difference between the means only but also on standard deviation and N number. The formulae of the test prove this:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{s_{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}} \qquad s_{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2} = \sqrt{\frac{s_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{s_2^2}{n_2}}.$$

In the case of the group having the smallest difference between the means (B1 speaking) the values are calculated in the following way:  $t = (76,5 - 69,4)/1,677 = 4,23$ . To this t-value a very small p-value belongs (degree of freedom = 311,  $p < 0,001$ ). In the case of the other tests the differences between the means are bigger which makes the t-value greater as a result of which the p-value becomes even smaller.

## **Discussion**

On the basis of the results obtained our answer to the first research question is yes. It seems that bilingual test takers do have an advantage when taking a language examination in a third language as compared to those who are monolingual. It has also been found that the difference in the performance of test takers – in each skill and each level – is statistically significant. This may be attributed to the fact that they not only have grown up but also live in a bilingual environment where they are constantly exposed to hearing and reading two languages. Consequently, they have a chance to develop better skills and learning strategies in these fields which then can be transferred to learning a third language. This finding can be related to those studies that have found a positive association between bilingualism and third language achievement (Aronin & Hufeisen, 2009; Auer & Weii, 2007; De Angelis, 2007; De Zarobe & Catalan, 2009) as well as to those other studies that have pointed out the positive influence of additive language contexts. In such situations the first language continues to be developed and the first culture to be valued while the second language is added (Cenoz, Hufeisen, & Jessner, 2001). On the basis of the data available it can be assumed that this is the case with most Hungarians who took the ECL language exam outside Hungary. They live in an additive language

context which means that in their case there is a positive association between bilingualism and third language achievement as this is reflected by the performance they achieved on the ECL tests.

The findings of the study also support the function of cross-linguistic influence (Sharwood-Smith, 1994, p. 198), meaning that multilingual learners are influenced by both their native and non-native languages. The works of De Angelis (2007) and Chandrasekhar (1978) posited that language transfer is most likely to occur between languages more closely related to one another; there is evidence that multilinguals are influenced by the language that is the closest to the target language and it does not matter whether it is their native tongue or not and learners rely on the language that most resembles the target language in production. Since Slovakian, Romanian, Serbian and English belong to the Indo-European language family we may assume that those test takers who speak these languages might also have an advantage in connection with English which, in turn, is reflected in their test performance.

According to the Relevance theory of Wilson and Sperber (2006), people's perceptual mechanism mechanically selects potentially relevant stimuli while their memory tends to activate potentially relevant assumptions. In the case of language acquisition the most relevant piece of information is likely to be the command of other languages that one already possesses. The function of such a mechanism is supported by the results of this study, which show that bilingual test takers outperformed their monolingual peers.

The research results coincide with Cummins' (1976, 1979) developmental interdependence hypothesis which proposes that our competence in a non-native language is partly dependent upon the competence we have achieved in our mother tongue because the skills developed in our native language can be transferred to the second language. According to Lasagabaster (2001), this hypothesis also implies that if two languages can have an interdependent relationship with each other, the same may occur between a second and a third language. The assumption of Lasagabaster is also supported by the results of this study which show that people who already speak two languages perform better on a language test taken in a third language than their monolingual peers.

The results of the study may also be explained on the basis of Vildomec's (1963) recency factor, meaning that non-native language influence is more likely

to occur from 'vivid' languages and if one lives in a non-native language environment; this could have an effect on the amount and type of influence on a third or additional language. Williams & Hammarberg (1998) also found that the length of residence and exposure to a non-native language environment are strongly related to multilingualism.

Taking a closer look at the results we can see that there is a greater gap in relation to the receptive skills that is listening and reading. The bilingual test takers had a 13–32% better performance in these skills. This result provides us with an answer to the second research question which is about the areas of language skills where advantages of bilingualism can be observed. Having analysed the differences between the performance of the bilingual and monolingual test takers, the following tendencies can be observed:

- there is a greater gap in relation to receptive skills – listening and reading – than in the case of the productive skills – speaking and writing;
- in the case of the receptive skills the gap decreases as the proficiency level increases;
- in the case of the speaking skill the gap increases as the proficiency level increases.

Bilingual test takers had a better performance in receptive skills (13%–32%) than in productive skills (7%–14%). The fact that the difference regarding the active or productive skills (speaking and writing) is not that big, though still significant, might only mean that people acquire a higher level of proficiency in the case of receptive skills earlier than in the case of active skills. It may be explained by the fact that bilinguals grow up in a bilingual environment where they are constantly exposed to, first of all, hearing and reading two languages. Therefore it might be assumed that the idea of Lasagabaster, that the developmental interdependence hypothesis can be extended to a third language, can exert its strongest influence in the case of receptive skills.

Regarding these particular skills (listening, reading) the tendency revealed by this study shows that the gap decreases as the level of proficiency increases. This tendency may be explained taking the nature of language learning into consideration. As the proficiency level of the learner grows the use of these

skills becomes more conscious and the initial advantage of the bilinguals diminishes. The difference, however, is still significant (13%–15%).

The tendency regarding the gap between the speaking skills is the opposite. The difference between the performance of the two groups, which is only 7% on level B1, is doubled by the time bilingual and monolingual learners reach level C1 (14%). These results may be explained on the basis of Vildomec's (1963) recency factor, meaning that non-native language influence is more likely to occur from 'vivid' languages and if one lives in a non-native language environment, this could have an effect on the amount and type of influence on a third or additional language. Williams & Hammarberg (1998) also found that the length of residence and exposure to a non-native language environment is strongly related to multilingualism. According to Dewaele (2002), the phenomenon that bilinguals achieve a higher performance level on a test of a third language may be attributed to the fact that as bilinguals have learned to use more languages, they have become better in the field of communication, have a higher level of self-confidence and have increased their self-perceived competence.

## **Conclusions**

The study has revealed that the overall performance (achieved in each of the four skills: listening, speaking, writing, reading) of bilingual test takers is significantly better than that of monolinguals ( $p < 0.001$ ). There is a greater gap in relation to receptive skills, which is listening and reading. Bilingual test takers had a 13%–32% better performance in these skills.

The major limitation of the study is that, using the data available, it was impossible to define the exact language background of the participants. There are different patterns of second language acquisition in their case. Some grow up in bilingual families and become early bilinguals, others grow up speaking Hungarian as their mother tongue and start learning the official language in school at the age of seven, and there are also others who grow up using one native tongue but start acquiring the official language before primary school because they live in a place inhabited by members of the majority. Baker (1998), referring to this situation, used a metaphor suggesting that there are not only various shades, but



several shades of many different colours of bilingualism, which makes it almost impossible to reach a precise definition on what constitutes a bilingual person. This pilot study, which is based on the reasonable assumption that the test takers outside of Hungary were bilingual, shows a significant difference between the test performance of bilingual and monolingual test takers. However, to obtain a clear picture it is important to repeat this survey using more controlled data in the future.

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## A KÉTNyelvűség ELŐNYEI: ÖSSZEHAsonLÍTÓ TANULMÁNY A KÉTNyelvűEK ÉS AZ EGYNyelvűEK VIZSGATELJESÍTMÉNYÉRŐL

**Összegzés.** A tanulmány az egynyelvű és kétnyelvű vizsgázói csoportok nyelvvizsgán nyújtott teljesítményét hasonlítja össze. Az ECL (European Consortium for the Certificate of Attainment in Modern Languages) vizsga, egy szintfelmérő típusú nyelvvizsga, amelyet Magyarországon és az őt körülvevő országokban is le lehet tenni. A két vizsgált csoport a következő: a Romániában, Szlovákiában és Szerbiában élő magyar és nagy valószínűség szerint kétnyelvű kisebbség, illetve a Magyarországon élő – 14 és 19 év közötti - gimnazista korosztály, amely egynyelvű. Kutatásunk arra a kérdésre kíván választ keresni, hogy a kétnyelvű vizsgázók vajon előnyben vannak-e az egynyelvű vizsgázókhöz képest akkor, amikor nyelvvizsgát tesznek az ő esetükben már harmadiknak számító nyelvből. A tanulmány összehasonlítja, megvizsgálja és elemzi a két csoport nyel vizsgán nyújtott teljesítményét, mely csoportok közül az egyik többnyelvű környezetből érkezik. Az eredmények azt mutatják, hogy a kétnyelvű vizsgázók összteljesítménye (amelyet a négy különböző vizsgarészen - szövegértés, beszédértés, szóbeli és írásbeli kommunikáció – érték el) szignifikánsan jobb, mint az egynyelvű társaiké ( $p < 0.001$ ). Az egy-, és kétnyelvű vizsgázók vizsgateljesítményét illetően három tendenciát sikerült azonosítani: (1) a receptív készségek (szövegértés, beszédértés) területén nagyobb a különbség a kétnyelvű vizsgázók javára; (2) a receptív készségek esetében e különbség csökken a nyelvtudás szintjének emelkedésével párhuzamosan; (3) a szóbeli kommunikáció esetében e különbség növekszik a nyelvtudás szintjének emelkedésével párhuzamosan. A tanulmány lehetséges válaszokat fogalmaz meg e jelenségekre.

**Kulcskifejezések:** kétnyelvűség, nyelvek közötti hatások, nyelvi tesztelés, többnyelvűség.

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**DVIKALBYSTĖS PRIVALUMAI: LYGINAMASIS ŽVALGOMASIS  
DVIKALBIŲ IR VIENAKALBIŲ MOKSLEIVIŲ TESTŲ ATLIKIMO  
TYRIMAS**

**Santrauka.** Straipsnyje analizuojami dviejų ECL (Europos šiuolaikinių kalbų kompetenciją tvirtinančių sertifikatų išdavimo konsorciumas) testus laikančių grupių kalbos egzamino rezultatų panašumai ir skirtumai. Šis kalbos egzaminas nustato kalbinę kompetenciją, vykdomas Vengrijoje ir aplinkinėse šalyse. Dvi tyrime dalyvaujančias grupes sudarė: (i) vengrų kalbos testą laikiusieji dvikalbiai, gyvenantys Rumunijoje, Slovakijoje ir Serbijoje bei (ii) vengrai gimtakalbiai, gyvenantys Vengrijoje, kurių amžius nuo 14 iki 19 metų. Tyrimo tikslas – nustatyti, ar testą laikiusieji dvikalbiai yra pranašesni, laikydami trečios kalbos egzaminą, lyginant su vienakalbiais moksleiviais. Tyrimu buvo siekiama palyginti, išskirti ir išanalizuoti šių dviejų skirtingų grupių testo atlikimo rezultatus. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad testą laikiusiųjų dvikalbių bendri testo atlikimo rezultatai (lyginant visų keturių kalbinės veiklos sričių – klausymo, kalbėjimo, rašymo ir skaitymo – pasiektus rezultatus) yra daug geresni nei vienakalbių, šis skirtumas yra statistiškai reikšmingas ( $p < 0.001$ ). Nustatytos trys dvikalbių ir vienakalbių testą laikiusiųjų moksleivių pasiektų rezultatų atžvilgiu tendencijos: (1) nustatyti didesni skirtumai tarp receptinių, – klausymo ir skaitymo, nei tarp produktinių kalbinės veiklos rūšių – kalbėjimo ir rašymo; (2) receptyviųjų veiklos rūšių atžvilgiu: šis skirtumas mažėja didėjant kalbinės kompetencijos lygiui; (3) kalbėjimo gebėjimų atžvilgiu: šis skirtumas išryškėja didėjant kalbinės kompetencijos lygiui. Straipsnyje pateikiami galimi šių reiškinių aiškinimai.

**Pagrindinės sąvokos:** daugiakalbystė, dvikalbystė, kalbos testavimas, tarpkalbinė įtaka.