

The Relationship between Bilingual and Empathy

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ABSTRACT

Empathy is an essential ability for humans; it is important to discuss its effects and influence. Language is also a part of our life, and it represents a different culture. With globalization, learning another language would become more and more familiar. However, is learning another language would benefit our lives? Based on the background, this article tried to the relationship between the bilingual and empathy. Previous studies have shown that there is a significant correlation between empathy and bilinguals. However, the previous researches would focus more on whether one aspect would affect the other one. This research will discuss the interaction between these two. On one way, bilinguals would be more empathetic than monolinguals. At the same time, empathy would influence multiple language learning after finding the interaction between the bilingual and empathy. This article also tried to explore the reason why bilinguals would be more empathetic than monolinguals. The search includes cultural background, emotional intelligence (EI), and cultural intelligence (CQ). This research would help to understand better the relationship between bilinguals and empathy and the reason behind the phenomenon that bilinguals would be more empathetic than monolinguals.

Keywords: *Bilingual, Empathy, Emotional Intelligence, Cultural Intelligence, Cross-culture*

1. INTRODUCTION

Empathy is an essential ability for human beings, it means to understand what other people feel emotional and put yourself in other's position [1]. Empathy is important in nowadays because it could help people to share their experiences, needs, desires and provide access that promotes pro-social behavior [2]. As the spiritual world has become more and more popular, empathy has become a familiar word. Most of the previous studies on empathy focused on the relationship between empathy and nerves. Considering from a practical point of view, with the improvement of social civilization, multi-language learning has been more common. Does multilingualism affect differences in empathy? Here, multilingual and monolingual variables will be used to study empathy.

Bilinguals or multilingual individuals have one key characteristic: they all have more than one language competence [3]. According to Dewaele and Wei [4], there is a significant positive correlation between multilingualism and empathy, which shows the advanced levels of proficiency in various foreign languages and could frequent use of these languages and cognitive

empathy. Therefore, here will discuss the relationship between bilingual and empathy development. The relationship is how two or more concepts are connected, so it is not unidirectional. As a result, the study would come from two perspectives: the effect of learning a second foreign language on the development of empathy of Monolinguals and bilinguals and how empathy influences multiple language learning.

Most of the research on empathy is concerned with the condition of a certain group, or the performance of a certain object. Here will discuss the differences between bilinguals and monolinguals in empathy, and which group is more empathetic.

This paper will be mainly divided into three parts to discuss whether bilinguals are more empathetic. Part one explores whether bilinguals are more empathetic. The second part will show the impact of empathy on multilingual learning. The reasons why bilinguals are more empathetic than monolinguals will be analyzed in more detail at the end.

2. ARE BILINGUALS MORE EMPATHETIC?

Language ability, an important factor of affecting empathy [5], so it also works for people with language differences. What this paper is talking about that whether bilinguals are more empathetic than monolinguals? This article here will discuss the problem from two aspects. One is the language comprehension ability of bilinguals, and the other is what kind of social flexibility bilinguals show in social life.

2.1. Differences in empathy due to language ability

Why do the paper use language comprehension as a starting point to research its impact on empathy? [5] directly discussed the relationship between empathy and language. This study uses CA method and CG Jung's theory to help explore the positioning of language in empathy from the perspective of empathy. (The CA method is a diagnostic tool that automatically evaluates the collected data online. CG theory is a definition of mental function proposed by Jung. Receiving information is called perception, organizing information and drawing conclusions is called judgment). It is concluded that language is one of the tools of empathy by analyzing natural dialogue and grammatical devices. The result shows that language is a necessary tool for empathy. Analyzing empathy in natural dialogue is the best example, because language ability is needed to analyze and explain empathy. Therefore, the quality of language ability determines the strength or weakness of empathy ability to some extent.

Since language comprehension corresponds to the ability to digest and interpret information, bilinguals naturally have an advantage in understanding others and empathy.

First of all, the article will explore from the perspective of language ability. In a study, monolingual and bilingual children performed complex language tasks with the same distraction, and the results showed that the bilingual children understood the meaning of sentences more accurately than the monolingual children [6]. The experiment concluded that bilinguals have stronger language comprehension ability, which requires bilinguals' ability to eliminate interference and concentrate on understanding. Bilingual children also outperformed monolinguals in recognizing and understanding irony, and in another study of bilingual children's understanding of irony, they scored highly in interpreting ironic sentences. This confirms bilinguals' strong ability to understand language [7]. Better comprehension means they are more likely to read the emotions and states of the other person when confronted with communication. By the way, they also have excellent analytical and explanatory abilities. These are

all essential for empathy. Therefore, from the aspect of language ability, the advantages of bilinguals' analytical ability can be seen.

2.2. Social flexibility and empathy

The paper will be discussed with bilinguals in terms of their social flexibility. Analyzing the differences in empathy between monolinguals and bilinguals from language comprehension alone may seem a little less convincing, so the results will be clarified by studying actual differences in social performance.

In a study of "social skills and empathy", the conclusion shows that empathy can almost be regarded as a basic social skill [8]. Social skills largely determine the quality of social expression. There is a conditional juxtaposition between social flexibility and empathy, and the difference of empathy determines social expressiveness. To have high social flexibility, the ability to change thinking and thinking openness is a very important existence. It is worth mentioning that bilinguals are actually more flexible than monolinguals. Whether from the conversion, understanding and reorganization of thinking, it has very obvious advantages [9]. This phenomenon may be a thinking change unconsciously formed by bilinguals in the process of learning multiple languages. Accepting multiple languages improves their receptivity of thinking.

In studies on the social flexibility of bilinguals and monolinguals, it's intuitively to see that bilinguals have higher social flexibility. Bilinguals excel in both environmental adaptability and social interaction [10]. The strong social flexibility is exactly the proof that bilinguals have better adaptability and better communicative ability. This shows that bilinguals have more open minds than monolinguals, which makes them easier to accept and tolerate new elements from foreign countries. And being open minded not only improved their social flexibility, but also their ability to empathize. Being more open makes bilinguals more able to put themselves in the other person's shoes.

Both of these aspects support the idea that bilinguals are more empathetic. Of course, there are more arguments for reference, and they are only used as partial examples here. Bilinguals are more expressive of empathy than monolinguals and their own variables, which is the most significant performance. Bilinguals are better than monolinguals, the reasons for these differences maybe they have strong tolerance due to the rendering of bilingual environment. A lot of the differences are developmental, and it's probably that most of them start from the moment they become bilingual.

Of course, there are many other arguments besides the two examples in this paper. It is the difference of language environment that leads to the difference of

communication habit, which can affect the way of thinking. Social flexibility is linked to the development of communication, understanding and tolerance, so bilinguals theoretically have an advantage in all of these areas. In this chain of tightly connected relationships, bilinguals do a good job of keeping their balance. So, the obvious answer is that bilinguals are indeed more empathetic than monolinguals. This does not mean that monolinguals outperform monolinguals in all categories, but bilinguals outperform monolinguals overall.

3. HOW THE EMPATHY INFLUENCE MULTIPLE LANGUAGES LEARNING

Empathy is an essential ability for human beings. It means to understand what other people feel emotionally and put yourself in others positions. As mentioned above, there is a positive correlation between multilingualism and empathy. Then whether empathy could influence people's multiple languages learning, it could, then how?

The research suggests that empathy rather than the social background, culture, or habits had the strongest relationship with foreign [11]. They also found that empathy has a significant impact on language learning. The article from Moate and Ruohotie [12] also highlights the importance of emotion within language education. According to this study, language learning influences individuals' relationship with the world in different ways, especially in intrinsically emotional. According to Weisskirch et al. [13], they found that empathy may play an important role in the relationship between language brokering and psychological well-being. Language brokering means children or young people who translate to represent family members who do not speak the local language. This more often happens in bilinguals or multilingual. When language brokers take their language responsibilities for parents, they are brought into intimate and personal circumstances that provide opportunities to understand their parents' and others' perspectives. These opportunities for understanding may build the language brokers' developing empathetic skills. Over time, empathy may indirectly affect how individuals perceive their language brokering and catching. The research indicates that empathy was positively associated with efficacy when language brokering by using Pearson product-moment correlation. The research indicates that empathy was positively associated with efficacy when language brokering by using Pearson product-moment correlation. Therefore, empathy would influence people's language learning, and it would bring benefits when people try to study a new language.

The effect of empathy in the language learning could be shown on teaching method. In the second language teaching method, there always emphasize the significance of empathy. Also, when empathy plays out in interactions between teachers and students in the class, it would influence students' engagement and motivation

in language learning [14]. Also, Henry and Thorsten [14] mentioned skilled language teachers are empathetic so that they would recognize and understand "the needs and emotional states of their students." From the second language learners' perspectives, a good language teacher relates to the positive connection among students through respect and empathy [15]. The participants in that research commonly expressed that a good language teacher-leader would listen and be receptive to students' thoughts. This would be related to the essence of empathy: put yourself in others' positions. For the immersion teaching method, it tries to achieve high levels of academic proficient language development in both languages by cultivating empathy for a student's second language culture [3].

4. THE REASON WHY BILINGUAL WOULD BE MORE EMPATHETIC THAN MONOLINGUAL

The reason bilinguals would be more empathetic than monolinguals is that language learning means cross-cultural learning, which benefits people's empathy. Language and culture are closely related; learning another language is learning another culture. According to Mazari and Naoual [16], culture plays a significant role in teaching or learning a foreign language. In this study, they discussed three main aspects between language and culture. First, learning a language could provide learners an opportunity to understand the relationship between language and other cultural phenomena. Then, learning a different language allows a comparison between the foreign language and the mother language, thus understanding similarities and differences between the two. At last, learning of the foreign culture could pass by the knowledge of one's own culture. As a result, there has a significant connection between language and culture.

Bilinguals would be more empathetic because they learn to negotiate between two different cultural worlds while understanding both [3]. Learning the minority language also support their understanding of culture and empathy. Literacy in the minority language could both provide a greater chance of survival at an individual level for the language and encourage the vision of one's heritage, culture, and intellectual empathy [3]. For the bilingual students who come from language minorities, it can effectively increase their empathy for others when they have cooperative learning [3]. At the same time, the person who has more empathy would also have willing to learn another language and culture. Women and those higher in empathy reported higher behavioral intentions to attend diversity programs [17].

There has a positive correlation between empathy and emotional intelligence, because bilinguals have a higher emotional intelligence, so that bilingual would be more empathetic. Bilinguals scored higher on Emotional intelligence than monolinguals: the Arabic-English

bilingual is 4.8, Arabic and English monolingual is around 4.57 [18]. As a result, compared to monolinguals, bilinguals have a significant advantage in Emotional intelligence, although it with a small effect size. Emotional intelligence is ability that could understand others' feelings, listen to and feel others, and to express his emotions in a productive way [19]. Empathy is a part of emotional intelligence because it is the capacity to understand others' feelings. Therefore, the positive correlation between emotional intelligence and bilingual could approve that bilingual would be more empathetic than monolingual.

Compare to emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence is more focus on an ability that allows individuals to understand and act appropriately across the different cultures [20]. However, there are some areas of overlap with EI, some aspects of EI are influenced by cultural background. There also has a positive correlation between cultural intelligence and empathy, bilinguals have higher CQ which means they are more empathetic. When individuals were less likely to be empathetic when they observe another's individual distress to result from a situation that would not typically cause someone from their own culture to be distressed [21]. Therefore, same as emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence also has a significant impact on empathy. Based on the research from Ahmadi [22], the result found that cultural empathy has a significant and meaningful impact on emotional intelligence. In this research, there has a positive correlation between cultural Empathy and CQ ($Sig=0.000<0.05$), and the strength of the relationship between cultural empathy and CQ is in high value: 0/545 [22]. The bilingual has higher cultural intelligence than monolingual. According to Soldatova and Geer [23], a recent study about emotional intelligence (CQ) and the number of languages shows that although the number of foreign languages does not relate to the CQ, there is a positive relationship between foreign language fluency and overall CQ.

5. CONCLUSION

The question "Are bilinguals more empathetic?" is discussed in terms of language competence and social flexibility. In tests such as natural conversations between different subjects, it was found that those with better language skills had an advantage. This is based on the premise that language represents good communication and understanding, which are essential props in the process of empathy.

Bilinguals are better than monolinguals in discussions of social flexibility. This proves that bilinguals tend to have a more open mind and are more sensitive in the conversion and application of their thoughts. This may have something to do with their bilingual environment. Bilingualism means they need to be receptive and

adaptable. It is probably that bilinguals do better socially than monolinguals because of this.

Both they conclude that bilinguals are indeed more empathetic.

Empathy has a significant impact on language learning in two aspects. First, it is important in language education. When empathy is used as a second language teaching method, it would increase students' engagement and motivation in language learning and achieve a high level of academic proficiency. Second, empathy would help language brokers to perceive their language brokering and catching.

There are three reasons for bilinguals would be more empathetic than monolinguals. First, Bilinguals would be more empathetic because they learn to negotiate between two different cultural worlds while understanding both. During learning another language, they would understand the relationship between language and other cultural phenomena and the similarities and differences between different cultures. Therefore, they could become more empathetic by understanding different perspectives. Another reason is that bilingual has a higher score higher on emotional intelligence than monolingual. According to Baker [3], emotional intelligence includes communication of feelings, relationship skills, self-esteem, social competence, and empathy. The higher emotional intelligence scores show a higher empathy. The last one is bilingual has higher cultural intelligence than monolingual. Same as emotional intelligence, there has a positive correlation between empathy and CQ. A person who has more cultural intelligence, he/she would be more empathetic.

This paper concludes that bilinguals are indeed more empathetic than monolinguals from a study of bilinguals' empathy. This result may be helpful to the psychological research of social groups or the research and interpretation of psychological problems that are widely concerned. The same can be said of education. Therefore, the apparent differences in empathy that many people see are backed up by evidence. Of course, this can also be used to extend research on how to enhance empathy or how empathy affects people's behavior.

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