

How Does Being Bilingual Impact the Cognitive and Social Aspects of Undergraduate Students?

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Background

Bilingualism refers to the ability to speak two languages fluently. Bilingualism intersects with the fields of economics, psychology, and education. Economically, bilingual individuals have a competitive edge in the job market and can facilitate international trade. In psychology, bilingualism enhances cognitive functions and contributes to mental well-being. In education, early exposure to a second language improves cognitive abilities and prepares students for a globalized world. The literature, "The bilingual gap in Children's Language, emotional, and Pro-social Development" by Deborah A. Cobb-Clark, Colm Harmon, and Anita Staneva, examines the potential effects of bilingualism on children's emotional, language, and social development. The authors argue that bilingualism possibly has both positive and negative effects on developmental outcomes and that the overall outcome is not entirely understood.

Project Topic

Our Project Topic is whether or not bilingualism is beneficial to a person and where the benefits lie, specifically among first-year incoming undergraduate students on the university level, allowing them to think differently.

Methods & Materials

Our methodology involved conducting a field survey at the Colorado State University Plaza to collect data from as many students within our specific category as possible. Our sampling and recruitment for our specific survey consisted of convenience sampling those who were readily available and personally close to. Our results relied on statements of experience rather than numbers to encompass the true impact.

Interviews: The two researchers conducted separate interviews with a total of seven interviews. There were three native Spanish speakers, one native Japanese speaker, one native German speaker, one native French speaker, and one native Arabic speaker.

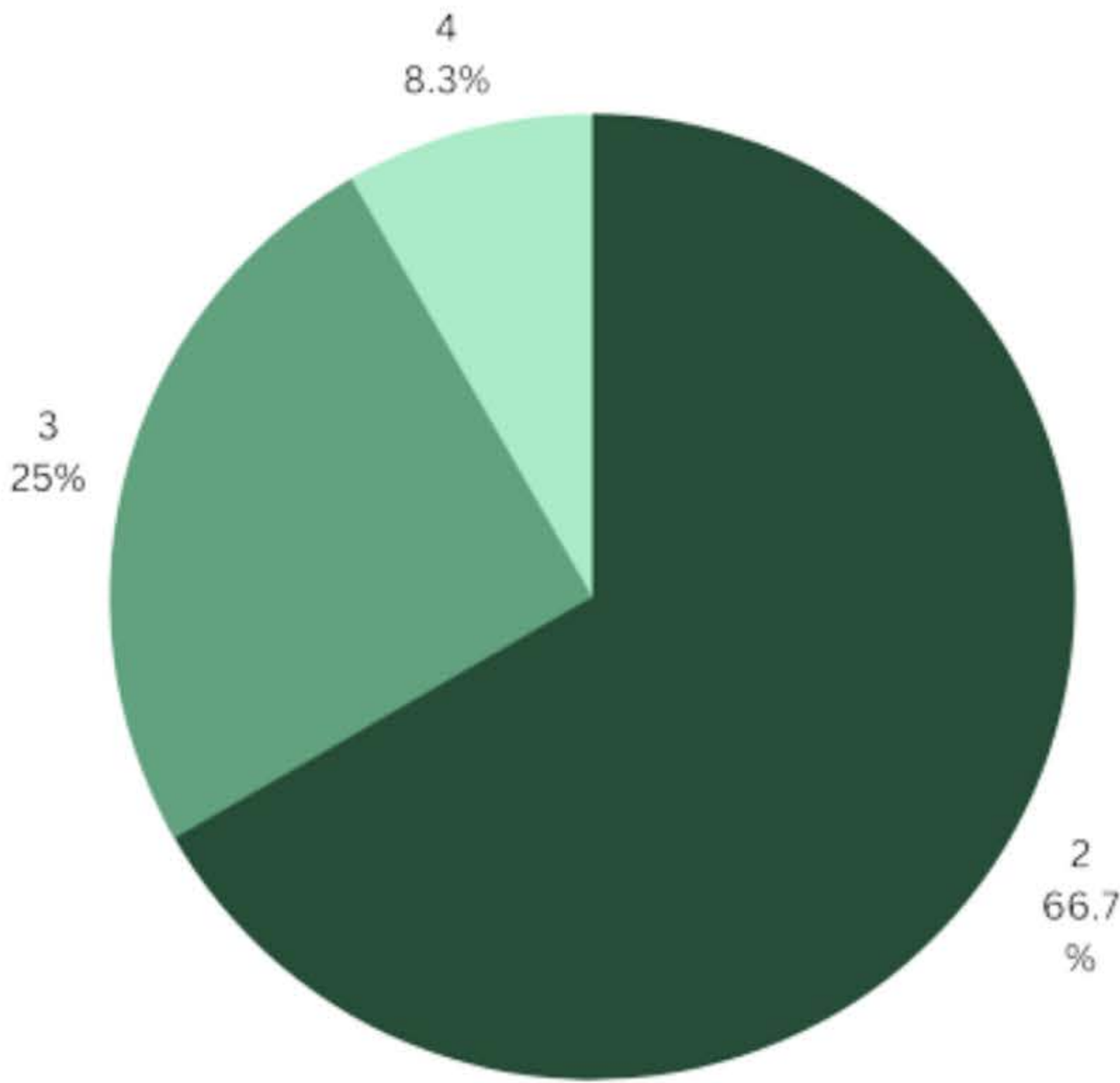
Survey: The survey consisted of 13 questions designed to have respondents reflect on their experiences being bilingual. Out of the 15 students who consented to participate in the survey, 13 actually responded to the entirety of the survey.

Improvement Suggestions for CSU

"I don't think there is many of the Arab Culture spread, many people don't know how it works in Kuwait. If there was, I was not aware of them."

"More time and budget for inclusion programs"

"I think that making sure all docs are in both languages is important and trying to get more Latinx students to enroll here because it's hard to represent that without the population."



How Many Languages Do You Speak?

Results

Encouraging and supporting bilingualism among university students can contribute to their holistic development and prepare them for an increasingly interconnected and diverse world.

Bilingualism enhances:

- cognitive abilities
- cultural understanding
- language proficiency
- cognitive flexibility
- academic performance

The results demonstrate that bilingualism enhances cognitive abilities, flexibility, and academic performance. Moreover, it fosters cultural understanding and language proficiency, equipping students with valuable skills and competencies for social interactions and future professional endeavors.

Interviewee 1: "Being bilingual has made me more flexible in thinking and problem-solving."

Interviewee 4: "Being bilingual has helped me understand and consider others' perspectives."

Conclusion

The importance of incorporating bilingualism into educational practices at the university level is emphasized by the findings.

Educational Practices: The findings emphasize the importance of incorporating bilingualism into educational practices at the university level.

Global Citizenship: The implications of bilingualism extend beyond the academic realm.

Workforce Readiness: The results highlight the significant career advantages associated with bilingualism.

Long-term Effects: Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of bilingualism

Future Directions

Specific Language Combinations: Investigating the impact of specific language combinations on thinking differently and cognitive abilities would offer a deeper understanding of how different language pairs contribute to cognitive flexibility and academic performance.

Evolving: Conducting longitudinal studies would enable researchers to track the development and long-term effects of bilingualism

Acknowledgements

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References

Cobb-Clark, Deborah A., Colm Harmon, and Anita Staneva. "The Bilingual Gap in Children's Language and Emotional Development," 2018.
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