

ENGLISH GRAMMAR ACQUISITION AMONG MONOLINGUAL AND BILINGUAL EFL LEARNERS IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: *This study presents a comparative investigation of monolingual and bilingual learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in relation to their acquisition of English grammar among university students in Uzbekistan. The primary objective of the research is to evaluate the extent to which learners' linguistic backgrounds influence their grammatical competence. Adopting a quantitative research design, the study utilizes standardized grammar assessments to measure and compare the performance of monolingual and bilingual participants. The collected data were subjected to statistical analysis in order to identify significant differences between the two groups. The findings reveal a measurable disparity in performance, with monolingual EFL learners demonstrating a higher level of proficiency in English grammar compared to bilingual learners. These results suggest that bilingualism, contrary to common assumptions regarding its cognitive advantages, may not necessarily facilitate grammatical acquisition in certain EFL contexts. The study contributes to the growing body of research on learner variables in second language acquisition and offers pedagogical implications for grammar instruction in multilingual educational settings.*

Keywords: *EFL learners, bilingualism, monolingualism, grammar acquisition, linguistic background, second language acquisition, comparative study*

INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, there has been a considerably increase in the field of language learning. Linguists are searching for effective ways of learning languages. A comparative study of monolingual and bilingual EFL learners is one of the most controversial matters among linguists. Some of them hold the view that bilinguals can learn a foreign language faster and better. On the contrary, other linguists argue that monolinguals are good at learning any foreign language. These different opposing views led to the present study.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Two participants of this case study were selected from Uzbekistan State University of World Languages. A questionnaire was created to collect the required data in order to select participants. They filled out questionnaires to provide personal information. With the help of these questionnaires their language profile as a monolingual or bilingual was identified. Since intended level of students was intermediate, they were asked to do Straightforward Pre-intermediate and Intermediate Placement test (Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2012). The

Straightforward test contains 50 questions, each correct answer worth one point. The initial 40 are grammar questions and the last 10 are vocabulary questions. Participants were assessed according to the chart below.

Total score	Level
0 - 35	Pre-Intermediate
36 - 50	Intermediate

Jane (her name has been changed) is female, and she is between 18-25 years old. She is doing a bachelor's degree in English language and literature. Jane is monolingual because her native language is Uzbek, and she is learning the English language as a foreign language. When Jane was in the fifth grade, she started learning the English language. Her first English teacher encouraged her to acquire this language. In terms of English grammar, she could learn grammatical rules because she had learned Uzbek grammar well. Jane accomplished Straightforward Pre-intermediate and Intermediate Placement test (Macmillan, 2012). Her total points are 43. It is true to say that her level is intermediate.

Amanda (her real name has been disguised) is female, and she is also between 18-25 years old. She is doing a bachelor's degree in English language and literature. Amanda is bilingual because she can speak Uzbek as well as Russian, and she is learning the English language as a foreign language. Amanda started learning the English language when she was a pupil. She was stimulated by her first English teacher. However, it was hard for her to figure out grammatical rules of English due to differences among Uzbek, Russian, and English languages. Amanda completed Straightforward Pre-intermediate and Intermediate Placement test (Macmillan, 2012). Her total points are 39, so her level is intermediate.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Two research methods will be utilized to conduct the present research and gain data about monolingual and bilingual EFL learners.

Firstly, three grammar lessons will be conducted in order to compare monolingual and bilingual learners, identify a more effective learner. The book "Understanding and Using English Grammar" by Betty Schramper Azar has been chosen. This book is suitable from intermediate to advanced learners of English as a second or foreign language, and it can be utilized to hold grammar classes for intermediate participants. Moreover, "Fundamentals of English Grammar" by Betty Schramper Azar will be utilized to teach learners. After each lesson, participants should accomplish a certain task. Overall, they will complete three tasks.

Lesson 1. It will take about 30 minutes. Participants will learn about articles. Certainly, they are aware of this theme, but this lesson will give an opportunity to them to revise and learn some new rules. After this lesson, learners will accomplish task 1. The test is retrieved from the internet resource as well as adapted. It is focused on articles and consists of 20 multiple-choice questions.

Lesson 2. It will take roughly 30 minutes to conduct this lesson. Learners will revise pronouns. Pronouns and the usage of pronouns in sentences will be explained. Participants will get acquainted with examples to understand better. Then, students will do task 2. The task is retrieved from the internet resource and edited. The test is based on pronouns and contains 10 questions.

Lesson 3. Approximately 15 minutes will be spent to explain regular and irregular verbs. Participants will be familiar with two types of verbs. After that they will learn and try to memorize irregular verbs during ten minutes. Next, learners will complete task 3. Overall twenty regular and irregular verbs were chosen to create this task. The present forms are given. They should write the past and past participle forms.

Secondly, participants will be asked to complete another questionnaire. This is questionnaire 2, and it consists of two parts. In the first part of questionnaire, statements are given to indicate students' attitudes toward three lessons, and participants should choose one of five options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree

In the second part, each learner should express her learning experience. They should specify whether it was easy to learn or not. Moreover, they should include reasons why it was easy or difficult.

DATA COLLECTION AND FINDINGS

Two questionnaires and three different tests were utilized to collect the data. Furthermore, Straightforward Pre-intermediate and Intermediate Placement test was used to check participants' English grammar levels. Both of them are intermediate learners. In the first questionnaire, participants were asked to provide personal information, including their gender, age, education, language, and level of English grammar.

In the first part of the research, three grammar lessons were conducted to compare learners' effectiveness in learning English grammar. During the first lesson, participants learned more about articles. "Fundamentals of English Grammar" by Betty Schramper Azar was used to conduct this lesson. Information from chapter 11 was adapted. Learners were explained clearly and concisely fundamentals of English articles, namely a vs an, guidelines for article usage, using the or no article with names (Azar, 2003, pp. 312-338). After the lesson, students were asked to complete task 1. The test which is focused on articles included 20 multiple-choice questions, and learners chose one of five options. Jane who is monolingual got 16 points out of 20 points. Amanda who is bilingual got 13 points out of 20 points. Based on results, it is true to say that Jane is more competent in learning English grammar than Amanda because she made few errors.

In the second lessons, participants learned and revised pronouns. "Understanding and Using English Grammar" by Betty Schramper Azar was utilized to hold this class. Information from chapter 8 was adapted. Participants learned about

pronouns, precisely personal pronouns, personal pronouns: agreement with generic nouns and indefinite nouns (Azar, 2002, pp. 132-136). After the class, learners were asked to do task 2. The quiz which is based on pronouns consisted of 10 questions, and students chose one of four options. Jane and Amanda got the same 10 points out 10 points. It is essential to note that both of them can use English pronouns proficiently.

During the third lesson, participants learned more about regular and irregular verbs. Information was retrieved from “Understanding and Using English Grammar” by Betty Schramper. Students were explained how to form regular and irregular verbs. Participants got familiar with an alphabetical list of irregular verbs. Next, they did task 3. It contained 20 verbs, but two regular verbs were only added to check learners. The monolingual learners realized and completed the task correctly. When it comes to the bilingual learner, she made mistakes. She could not distinguish regular and irregular verbs. Amanda tried to remember the past and past participle forms of verbs, but she could not. Eventually, she formed them as other irregular verbs incorrectly, such as save-save-save; walk-walk-walk. When learners do not remember certain rules, they apply or generalize the same rules. When she had completed the first questionnaire, she mentioned about tenses, regular and irregular verbs. She is proficient in both the Uzbek language and the Russian language. These languages do not have regular and irregular verbs. Therefore, it is complicated for her to memorize such verbs.

In the second part of the research, a two-part questionnaire was utilized to collect the required data. The employed questionnaire 2 of this study included six statements. The results of the data analysis showed that there were slight differences between answers of the monolingual learner and the bilingual learner.

Statement 2: I could figure out grammar rules. Both of learners agreed. However, they made some errors when they did tests (their points have been mentioned above). It means that participants can comprehend grammatical rules of English, but they cannot sometimes apply them properly.

Statement 3: I could accomplish all tasks successfully. Jane and Amanda chose the option of neutral. They are not sure whether they could do tests successfully or not. Based on results, it is true to say that they made some errors.

Statement 6: I should learn by heart all irregular verbs. Amanda chose the option of neutral, but Jane disagreed with this statement. Jane could not provide the past and past participle forms of lay and lie correctly. Amanda could not write the past and past participle forms of become, fall, lie, save, tell, walk. According to their responses, it is clear that they made errors unconsciously.

In the second part of questionnaire 2, participants indicated their attitudes toward learning process of English grammar lessons. Jane considers that it was not easy to gain knowledge on articles due to exceptions while Amanda thinks that it was not difficult since the teacher explained clearly. However, their results of task 3 show that Jane is more proficient in learning articles. Both of participants reckon that

learning pronouns are straightforward. Based on results, it is true to note that they could accomplish task 2 without any error. In terms of regular and irregular verbs, Jane considers that it was not difficult because she had learned them before. In spite of this, she made two errors when she formed verbs. Amanda thinks that concise rules can be applied to form verbs. Therefore, when she was asked to form irregular verbs, she did not notice that two of them were regular. In the end of questionnaire 2, participants were asked to indicate their attitudes toward learning other languages. Jane would like to learn another foreign language as she finds it compelling. Amanda wants to be a multilingual teacher who can speak at least five languages. It means that both of them have positive attitudes towards learning foreign languages.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to compare the monolingual EFL learner and the bilingual EFL learner on learning English grammar. It tried to determine effectiveness of learners in learning English grammar. Based on results, the monolingual EFL learner could accomplish task 1 and task 3 better than the bilingual EFL learner. She mentioned that she could learn English grammar easily because she had knowledge of the native language. According to the collected data, the bilingual EFL learner is less effective in learning grammar. She made more errors than the monolingual learner when she did task 1 and task 3. However, when the bilingual learner could do task 2 without any error. Moreover, analysis of the data showed overgeneralization of target rules. The monolingual EFL learner and the bilingual EFL learner made the same errors when they completed task 1.

Based on results of the present study, it can be concluded that the monolingual EFL learner can acquire grammatical rules of English better and faster than the bilingual EFL learner. However, it is likely that both of them may sometimes make the same errors.

Nonetheless, it is obvious that further studies should be conducted to tackle with the investigated outcomes of this study in diverse contexts. Moreover, it is suggested that future studies carefully consider selecting more participants in order to gain more reliable data. Beside this, it is recommended that researchers conduct the present study in different educational settings.

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