**Early Multilingualism from a Cognitive Perspective**

Lecturer: Ágnes Melinda Kovács, kovacsag@ceu.edu   
TA: Maria Mavridaki, mavridaki\_maria@phd.ceu.edu

Elective 2 credits, Fall Term, 2023/24

Tuesday 10:40-11:40, room D108

Thursday 10:40-11:40, room A211

Office hours: by appointment

This course introduces students to crucial issues in the Cognitive Science of Multilingualism by providing an overview on the cognitive consequences of bi-/multilingualism in different domains (e.g. linguistic abilities, executive functions, social cognition, etc.) across development. Some of the questions addressed during the course relate to the following topics: Does multilingualism create language delays and/or confusion? Do bilinguals learn foreign languages easier? Do bilinguals take easier another person’s perspective? Do bilinguals make different moral evaluations in their two languages? Does bilingualism lead to changes in the brain? Is multilingualism a cognitive reserve? The course also aims to familiarize students with the research methods used within Cognitive Science (e.g. behavioral, eye-tracking and neuroimaging) and it strongly encourages students to reflect on the implications that research in Cognitive Science can have for policy making, education and society more broadly.

**Learning outcomes:**

By the end of the course, students should

* be familiar with the main theoretical debates and the major experimental findings related to the cognitive consequences of multilingualism in various domains: language, social cognition, reasoning across the lifespan
* understand crucial issues in cognitive research on multilingualism
* have a basic grasp of the approaches and methods used in Cognitive Science
* be able to critically analyze research findings and theoretical proposals
* be able to rely on tools/findings from Cognitive Science when analyzing societal issues

**Week 1 (Sept 19-21)**

***Lecture:* General Introduction**

***Seminar:* Class activity:Quotes & Comments**

**Homework for seminar:**

Thomas Bak – Cognitive Consequences of Language Learning <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNSGwH-qC3g&t=2294s>

**Week 2 (Sept 26-28)**

***Lecture:* The cognitive consequences of multilingualism: challenges, benefits, or adaptations?**

**Readings/Homework for lecture:**

Diamond, J. (2010). The benefits of multilingualism. *Science*, *330*(6002), 332-333.

Kovacs, A. M. (2015). Cognitive adaptations induced by a multi-language input in early development. *Current Opinion in Neurobiology*, *35*, 80-86.

***Seminar:* Class activity:Evaluating a study on bilingualism**

**Readings for seminar:**

Hakuta, K., Ferdman, B. M., & Diaz, R. M. (1987). Bilingualism and cognitive development: Three perspectives. *Advances in Applied Psycholinguistics*, *2*, 284-319.

**Week 3 (Oct 3-5)**

***Lecture:* Early monolingual and multilingual language acquisition**

**Readings for Lecture:**

Werker, J. F., & Byers-Heinlein, K. (2008). Bilingualism in infancy: First steps in perception and comprehension. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *12*(4), 144-151.

Fibla, L., Kosie, J. E., Kircher, R., Lew-Williams, C., & Byers-Heinlein, K. (2022). Bilingual language development in infancy: What can we do to support bilingual families?. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *9*(1), 35-43.

**Optional reading:**

Kovács, Á. M. & Mehler, J (2009). Flexible learning of multiple speech structures in bilingual infants. Science, 325. 611 – 612. doi:10.1126/science.1173947

Antovich, D. M., & Graf Estes, K. (2018). Learning across languages: Bilingual experience supports dual language statistical word segmentation. *Developmental Science*, *21*(2), e12548.

**Seminar**: Cognitive Development Center, CEU – Lab Tour

**Week 4 (Oct 10-12)**

***Lecture:*** **Multilingualism and executive functions**

**Readings for lecture:**

Navarro-Torres, C. A., Beatty-Martínez, A. L., Kroll, J. F., & Green, D. W. (2021). Research on bilingualism as discovery science. *Brain and language*, *222*, 105014.

Kovács, Á. M., & Mehler, J. (2009). Cognitive gains in 7-month-old bilingual infants. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *106*(16), 6556-6560.

***Seminar:* Debate**

**Readings for seminar:**

**Group 1**

Lowe, C. J., Cho, I., Goldsmith, S. F., & Morton, J. B. (2021). The bilingual advantage in children’s executive functioning is not related to language status: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological science*, *32*(7), 1115-1146.

**Group 2**

Ware, A. T., Kirkovski, M., & Lum, J. A. (2020). Meta-analysis reveals a bilingual advantage that is dependent on task and age. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 1458.

**Week 5 (Oct 17-19)**

***Lecture:*** **Influences of bilingualism on language acquisition and metalinguistic awareness**

**Readings for lecture:**

Siegal, M., Iozzi, L., & Surian, L. (2009). Bilingualism and conversational understanding in young children. Cognition, 110, 115–122.

Singh, L. (2018). Bilingual infants demonstrate advantages in learning words in a third language. *Child Development*, *89*(4), e397-e413.

**Seminar: Q&A**

**Readings for seminar:**

Policy report 04 – Multimind Project - How to support language and literacy development in heritage majority and foreign language classrooms?

https://www.multilingualmind.eu/policy-reports

**Week 6 Oct 24 (Note: Oct 26-no class/holiday)**

***Lecture:*** **How does multilingualism shape the use of social categories and ingroup selective learning?**

**Readings for lecture:**

Singh, L., Tan, A. R., Lee, K., & Quinn, P. C. (2020). Sensitivity to race in language comprehension in monolingual and bilingual infants. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *199*, 104933.

Singh, L., Moh, Y., Ding, X., Lee, K., & Quinn, P. C. (2021). Cognitive flexibility and parental education differentially predict implicit and explicit racial biases in bilingual children. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *204*, 105059.

**Week 7 (Oct 31-Nov 2)**

***Lecture:*** **Multilingualism and thinking about others’ perspective**

**Readings for lecture:**

Rubio-Fernández, P. (2017). Why are bilinguals better than monolinguals at false-belief tasks?. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, *24*(3), 987-998.

Liberman, Z., Woodward, A. L., Keysar, B., & Kinzler, K. D. (2017). Exposure to multiple languages enhances communication skills in infancy. *Developmental Science*, *20*(1), e12420.

**Optional readings:**

Kovács, Á. M. (2009). Early bilingualism enhances mechanisms of false‐belief reasoning. *Developmental Science*, *12*(1), 48-54..

***Seminar:*** **Jigsaw activity**

**Readings for seminar:** Diaz, V., & Farrar, M. J. (2018). The missing explanation of the false‐belief advantage in bilingual children: A longitudinal study. *Developmental science*, *21*(4), e12594

**Week 8 (Nov 7-9)**

***Lecture:*** **Multilingualism and mental fitness**

**Readings for lecture:**

Bialystok, E. (2021). Bilingualism: Pathway to cognitive reserve. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *25*(5), 355-364.

***Seminar:* poster/audio advertisement**

**Week 9 (Nov 14-16)**

***Lecture:*** **Bilingualism, moral decisions and emotions**

**Readings for lecture:**

Costa, A., Foucart, A., Hayakawa, S., Aparici, M., Apesteguia, J., Heafner, J., & Keysar, B. (2014). Your morals depend on language. *PloS One*, *9*(4), e94842.

Chen, S. H., Kennedy, M., & Zhou, Q. (2012). Parents’ expression and discussion of emotion in the multilingual family: Does language matter?. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *7*(4), 365-383.

***Seminar:*** **Q&A**

**Readings for seminar:**

Singh, L. (2020). Bilingual infants are more sensitive to morally relevant social behavior than monolingual infants. *Journal of Cognition and Development*, *21*(5), 631-650.

**Week 10 (Nov 21-23)**

***Lecture:*** **Multiple languages in the brain - Sensitive periods for language learning**

**Readings for lecture:**

Bialystok, E., & Kroll, J. F. (2018). Can the critical period be saved? A bilingual perspective. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, *21*(5), 908-910.

Del Maschio, N., Sulpizio, S., & Abutalebi, J. (2020). Thinking outside the box: The brain-bilingualism relationship in the light of early neurobiological variability. *Brain and Language*, *211*, 104879.

***Seminar:***  **Commentary Presentation**

**Readings for seminar:**

Abutalebi, J., & Clahsen, H. (2018). Critical periods for language acquisition: New insights with particular reference to bilingualism research. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, *21*(5), 883-885.

+ Commentary

**Week 11 (Nov 28-30)**

***Lecture:*** **Should the effects of Multilingualism and Multiculturalism be disentangled? How?**

**Reading for lecture:**

Kandhadai, P., Danielson, D. K., & Werker, J. F. (2014). Culture as a binder for bilingual acquisition. *Trends in Neuroscience and Education*, *3*(1), 24-27.

**Optional reading:**

Bialystok, E., & Viswanathan, M. (2009). Components of executive control with advantages for bilingual children in two cultures. *Cognition*, *112*(3), 494-500.

***Seminar:* QALMRI**

**Readings for seminar:**

Treffers-Daller, J., Ongun, Z., Hofweber, J., & Korenar, M. (2020). Explaining individual differences in executive functions performance in multilinguals: The impact of code-switching and alternating between multicultural identity styles. Frontiers in Psychology, 11, 561088.

**Week 12 (Dec 5-7)**

***Lecture:*** **Multilingualism and Education**

**Readings for lecture:**

Poarch, G. J., & Bialystok, E. (2017). Assessing the implications of migrant multilingualism for language education. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, *20*(2), 175-191.

**Optional reading:**

Posso, A. (2023). Bilingual education and child labor: Lessons from Peru. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, *212*, 840-872.

***Seminar:* Project**

**Readings for seminar:**

Chapter 9 **-** Horner, K., & Weber, J. J. (2017). *Introducing multilingualism: A social approach*. Routledge.

**Grading scheme**

1. Active participation during the lectures and at least one question per lecture posted 20%
2. Five-minute paper presentation during lecture 20%
3. Seminar activities 20%
4. Final project: From Cognitive Science to Multilingual Policies 40%