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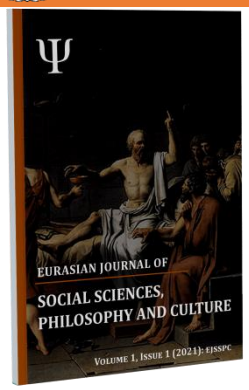

BILINGUALISM AND MULTILINGUALISM

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ABSTRACT

Bilingualism and multilingualism refer to individuals or societies proficient in two or more languages. This abstract explores the cognitive, cultural, and societal aspects of language proficiency, examining benefits such as enhanced cognitive abilities and cultural exchange. It also considers challenges, including language interference and identity complexities. The dynamic nature of bilingualism and multilingualism underscores their significance in our interconnected world, influencing education, communication, and global understanding.

A bilingual individual is someone who can communicate in two languages at a native level or with very high proficiency. The term "balanced bilingual" refers to someone who speaks each language as well as an educated native speaker. This is often considered an ideal type, as it is believed that only a few people achieve this standard. In practice, bilingualism exists on a continuum of language proficiency, with varying degrees of competence in each language.

Literacy can be an important aspect of bilingualism, but it is often treated separately, leading to bilingualism being associated primarily with oral language skills. Bilingualism is a specific case of multilingualism, where there is no limit to the number of languages a speaker can be fluent in. The timing and sequence of learning each language can create differences among types of multilingualism. For example, much of the linguistic literature defines "mother tongue" as the first language, often ignoring or undervaluing the possibility of having multiple mother tongues. Individuals who acquire two languages simultaneously are often referred to as simultaneous bilinguals, while those who learn a second language after their first are known as sequential bilinguals (with "early" typically referring to childhood and "late" to adulthood). Additionally, the context of language acquisition distinguishes between 'informal' bilinguals, who learn a language outside of formal settings like schools—mimicking the natural processes of mother tongue acquisition—and 'formal' bilinguals, who typically learn a language in structured environments such as schools.

Language diversity. The world's linguistic diversity depends on both the size of the global population and the number of languages spoken. The world's population has grown from about 300 million at the time of Christ to approximately 1 billion in 1804, 2 billion in 1927, and 6 billion by the end of 1999. It is expected to reach 10 billion by 2183. In 1804, there were only

four countries with populations exceeding 100 million; by 2003, this number had risen to 11. According to United Nations forecasts, by 2050 the number of such countries will increase to 18. India, China, and the US have consistently been among the top three countries in terms of population. The 20th century saw the greatest period of population growth in human history, with the world's population nearly quadrupling. The highest growth rate occurred between 1965 and 1970 (2 percent per year), and the largest annual population increase occurred in the late 1980s, when 86 million people were added to the world's population each year. It is also important to remember that the distribution of populations and their languages around the world is uneven and has changed over time. These changes are expected to continue, at least for the foreseeable future. For example, in 1750, 64% of the world's population lived in Asia, 21% in Europe, 13% in Africa, and 2% in the Americas. By 1950, Asia's share had decreased by about 10%, and Africa's by about 4%. Europe remained stable at 22%, but the Americas' share rose to 14%, split equally between the northern and southern regions. The United Nations Population Division predicts that by 2150, Europe's and North America's percentages will decline from 22% to 7%, and from 7% to 4%, respectively. Asia will remain stable at 60%, while Africa's share will double from 9% to 24%, and Latin America will see a slight increase from 7% to 9%.

The changing distribution of populations around the world has and will continue to affect the number of speakers of certain languages in these regions. Urbanization and migration increase the likelihood of language contact between speakers of different languages. By the mid-20th century, more than half of the world's population was considered urban. By the end of the 20th century, about 4% of the world's population lived outside their country of birth.

Table 1

Language	Hub	Number	First Language
Chinese (Mandarin)	China	16	874
Hindi	India	17	366
English	United Kingdom	104	341
Spanish	Spain	43	322-358
Bengali	Bangladesh	9	207
Arabic			207
Portuguese	Portugal	33	176
Russian	Russia	30	167
Japanese	Japan	26	125
German	Germany	40	100

The world's linguistic diversity is only now being better understood and described. Estimates of the number of languages in the world vary due to differences in data quality, methods, and definitions of what constitutes a language. Some authors estimate that between 30,000 and 500,000 languages have been created and have died over the course of human history, suggesting that languages are generally short-lived and have a high mortality rate. Only a few languages (such as Basque, Egyptian, Chinese, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Persian, Sanskrit, and Tamil) have lasted for more than two thousand years.

One of the most cited and consistent sources on languages and their number of speakers estimates that there were about 6,800 spoken languages in the world at the beginning of the 21st century. Some experts suggest that the inclusion of sign languages could raise that estimate to 12,000 human languages. In 2000, Chinese Mandarin, English, Hindi, Spanish, and Arabic were identified as the languages with the largest number of native speakers (Table 1).

Government or organizational surveys often count only one language per person when tallying speakers, despite the widespread reality of multilingualism around the world. This current multilingualism has been facilitated by closer linguistic contacts in the 20th century, partly as a legacy of colonialism and the postcolonial practice of creating new nation-states with populations belonging to different ethno-linguistic communities.

In many former colonies, a colonial language (e.g., English, French, Spanish, Dutch) became widely spoken as a second or substitute language among the colonized population. However, language proficiency among these speakers varied widely. In some cases, the number of speakers of these colonial languages is greater outside the metropolitan areas of the colonizing nation, and second-language speakers may even outnumber native speakers. For example, in 1999, there were approximately 341 million native English speakers and 508 million second-language speakers worldwide. Similarly, around 358 million people worldwide spoke Spanish as a native language, while 417 million spoke it as a second language.

The languages listed in 2000 were unevenly distributed across different continents. Africa had 30% of the world's languages but only 13% of the global population. Asia accounted for about 33% of the world's languages and 61% of its population. The Pacific region represented about 19% of the world's languages, the Americas about 15%, and Europe about 3%, despite Europe comprising about 12% of the global population. The two most linguistically diverse countries, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, together had more than 22% (1,500) of the world's spoken languages, most of which were not spoken in other countries. In fact, 83-84% of the world’s languages are spoken in only one country.

The number of speakers per language varies greatly, ranging from just a few hundred to over a hundred million. At the beginning of the 21st century, the average number of native speakers per language was between 5,000 and 6,000. More than 95% of the world's spoken languages have fewer than 1 million speakers. About 5,000 (83%) of the world’s spoken languages have fewer than 100,000 speakers, and over 3,000 languages are spoken by fewer than 10,000 people. Approximately 1,500 spoken languages, along with most sign languages, have fewer than 1,000 users. In 1999, about 500 languages were spoken by fewer than 100 people.

Language diversity in civil society. The basic meaning of "civil society" is generally understood as social interaction, organization, and activity that occurs outside of government or the state. From this perspective, the role of linguistic diversity in civil society has varied depending on time and circumstances. Factors such as whether a group or society is predominantly rural or urban, patterns of settlement, or migration often influence language diversity and individual bilingualism. Social and political relations between groups frequently determine how languages are perceived, valued, or used—whether as a resource, a problem, or even as part of the civil and human rights of individuals or groups in society. For example, Sue Wright describes European elites during much of the Middle Ages and Renaissance as

"multicultural and multilingual" due to their need to communicate and cooperate despite the region's various mother tongues. Learning other languages was seen as an expected and normal activity for this mobile elite. However, most of the population consisted of sedentary peasants or serfs who lived in small, monolingual villages and had no contact with, or need to learn, other languages. They spoke different language families: Romance, Germanic, Celtic, Slavic, or Baltic. The dominant Christian Church operated across various kingdoms and "nations," using Latin as the common language of communication. In general, villagers tried to accommodate "others" who did not speak the village language, such as travelers or soldiers, but people could usually understand one another from one village to the next, even if their languages differed slightly.

According to Eduardo Ruiz Vieytes, three movements caused a significant change: the strengthening of national kingdoms, the Reformation of the Church, and the development of the printing press. The amalgamation of kingdoms into stronger territories meant that royalists ruled over a multilingual population, and the vernacular of the capital became the standard. The first grammar of such a vernacular language was presented to the King and Queen of Castile (Spain) in 1492 as a tool of state-building, alongside a sword and a Bible. The Reformation encouraged the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages, which created a need for literacy and the standardization of texts across languages. Wright describes the emerging relationship between language and print: "Printers eagerly embraced standardized languages. Print capitalism benefited from the standardization of national languages because the process created larger markets than the fractured linguistic landscape of dialect continuity."

In Europe, by the 18th and 19th centuries, the concept of the nation was understood in terms of citizenship, ethnicity, or culture. State-building pressures were placed on various groups within civil states with defined territories. In ethnic states, boundaries were drawn around a dominant group, while other ethnolinguistic groups were often marginalized. The standardization of a single language and its integration with the state helped create a unified concept of the nation as a single cultural entity, though in reality, many of these nations had regional, historically rooted linguistic minorities (e.g., Catalans or Basques), as well as migrant or nomadic language groups that persisted into the early 21st century (such as the Roma).

Another model of linguistic diversity and civil society can be found in the Aztec Empire of 15th-century Mexico. In the 14th and 15th centuries, the Aztec Empire was established as a subordinate system, with the Nahuatl language used in the capital and throughout the empire. In the empire's conquered territories, bilingual administrators—such as tax collectors and local governors—served as intermediaries between local towns and villages and facilitated tribute payments and administrative interactions with the central government. Beyond these interactions, the need for Nahuatl was minimal among the indigenous populations, who continued to use their native languages. However, the language of the empire was highly valued, and its prestige encouraged individual bilingualism, although this was not widespread.

The situation changed after contact with the Spanish and later with other Europeans. With the establishment of Spanish colonial structures, the Spanish language became a "weapon" not only for state-building but also for empire-building. It emerged as an authoritative language, particularly in the processes of evangelism and conversion. The libraries of the Aztec Empire were burned and destroyed by the Spaniards, and religious leaders, colonial administrators, and local elites who learned each other's languages became bilingual, contributing to the

creation of revised local histories and knowledge. Over time, Spanish began to be promoted as the sole substitute for indigenous languages, leading to an increase in the number of Spanish speakers, although many indigenous languages survived into the early 21st century.

Table 2

Countries	Languages	Population (2003)
Papua New Guinea	850	5,500,000
Indonesia	670	220,500,000
Nigeria	410	133,900,000
India	380	1,068,600,000
Cameroon	270	15,700,000
Australia	250	19,900,000
Mexico	240	104,900,000
Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo)	210	56,600,000
Brazil	210	176,500,000
Philippines	172	81,600,000

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