



## The Effect of Bilingualism on the Listening Strategies and Listening Anxiety among Iranian Junior High School Students

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### Abstract

The main goal of this study was to cross-compare the relationship between bilingual and monolingual EFL learners' listening strategy use (cognitive, metacognitive, and socioaffective) and their listening anxiety. In this study, the Persian versions of Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) and Listening Strategy Questionnaire (LSQ) were administered to 200 high-school students in Mashhad and Bojnourd, two cities in Northeast of Iran. The results demonstrated no significant difference between two groups of students neither in total listening strategy use nor in the comprising components, i.e., cognitive, metacognitive, and socioaffective. However, a significant difference was observed between two groups in listening anxiety. It was also found that bilingualism tends to moderate the association between strategies and anxiety.

**Keywords:** listening strategies, listening anxiety, bilingualism, novice EFL learners

### INTRODUCTION

The effect of bilingualism on third language acquisition is one of the main areas of interest in research concerning third language studies. Cenoz (2003, p. 71) defined third language acquisition as "the acquisition of a non-native language by learners who have previously acquired or are acquiring two other languages".

Most studies tend to indicate advantages in bilinguals over monolinguals in language acquisition especially when the learner's bilingualism is additive rather than subtractive (Cenoz, 2003). They believe that learning an additional language for bilingual learners is easier than monolinguals. It is also believed that bilinguals' previous experience in

learning another language helps them encounter less problems during third language learning.

By the same token, bilingualism is one of the factors that seem to affect the use of language learning strategies. In numerous countries of the world especially in USA many investigations have been conducted about monolingual and bilingual learners' learning strategies. The studies that have compared the strategies used by monolingual and bi/multilingual learners showed that multilingual learners are more flexible in using different strategies in comparison with monolingual learners (McLaughlin & Nayak, 1989 as cited in Cenoz, 2003).

One of the ways learners become actively involved in controlling their own learning is by using strategies. Many of the scholars such as Oxford (1990), O'Malley and Chamot (1985), and Goh (2008) pointed out that learning strategy use is one of the important factors affecting language learning.

Despite numerous studies in this area of research, the effect of bilingualism on language learning in Iran has not received adequate attention. Because of the importance of using language learning strategies, the present study attempted to examine the impact of bilingualism on beginner language learners' listening strategies.

Similarly, the role of affective factors such as anxiety in EL learning gained priority in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and foreign language listening anxiety was seen as a distinct type of situation-specific anxiety. Therefore, the present study also examined the differences between monolingual and bilingual learners' listening anxiety in the classroom situation.

Accordingly, the following research questions were posed and investigated in this research:

1. Is there any difference between bilingual and monolingual language learners' listening strategies?
2. Is there any difference between bilingual and monolingual EFL learners' in their listening anxiety level?
3. Is there any relationship between EFL learners' listening strategies and their anxiety level?
4. Does bilingualism has any effect on the relationship between learners' listening strategies and anxiety?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Bilingualism and third language learning**

Yule (2006, p.238) defined bilingual as "a term used to describe a native speaker of two languages in contrast to monolingual". Asia and Africa are the most multilingual continents, where several languages are part of everyday life (Cenoz, 2013). Bialystok et al. (2009, p. 89) stated that "as the world becomes more interconnected, it is increasingly

apparent that bilingualism is the rule and not the exception. Not only do some countries support bilingual populations because of cultural and linguistic diversity within its citizenry, but also increased global mobility has enlarged the number of people who have become bilingual at all levels of society". Bialystok (2001) considered a bilingual child as a person who functions equally in two languages and has an effortless move between them with a suitable sociocultural sense for each language.

Brown (2007) divided bilinguals in two groups, coordinate bilinguals that refer to people who learn second language in a separate context and they have two meaning systems. The other group is compound bilinguals that refer to people whose both languages operated through one meaning system.

Romaine (1995, as cited in Bialystok, 2001) outlined six patterns of home language bilingualism as follows:

1. one person, one language
2. nondominant home language /one language
3. non dominant home language without community support
4. double non dominant home language without community support
5. nonnative parents
6. mixed languages

Dopke (1992, as cited in Bialystok, 2001) proposed two kinds of bilingualism, productive bilingual and receptive bilingual. The first is familiar with speaking two languages to some degree of competence and the second can understand or possibly read a second language without being able to produce.

Since the presence of different ways to be bilingual, such as, some people are born bilingual, some aspire to bilingualism, and some of them have pushed upon them later in life, Bialystok et al. (2009) indicated that bilingual experience is heterogeneous.

There are important differences in the use of the languages. Some L3 learners use their other languages in everyday life; they are 'active bilinguals'. But some of them live in a monolingual context and use their second language only occasionally. Some learners are early bilinguals and exposed to two languages from birth. They use their two languages in everyday life, but many of learners learn their second language at school, then the first group are 'active bilinguals' and the second group are 'foreign language users' (Cenoz, 2013.)

According to Lambert (1981, as cited in Sanz, 2000), sociolinguistic situation results in additive and subtracting consequences. When people learn a language to become bilingual, bilingualism results in additive linguistic, and when people learn a language to replace their native language, bilingualism results in subtracting linguistic.

## **Learning an additional language**

Cenoz (2003) wrote "according to folk wisdom, additional languages are acquired by bilinguals and multi-linguals more easily than by monolinguals. That is, the more languages one knows, the easier it becomes to acquire an additional language".

Learning an additional language after all is very easy for those who know a second language than for monolinguals. There is positive transfer between two languages when the first and second languages are cognate and there are similarities between them. For example, there are a lot of lexical and syntactic similarities between Indo European languages such as German, English and French. Since bilinguals have a previous experience in learning other language then during third language learning they encounter less problems than inexperienced monolingual learners (Basturkand, 2011.)

## **The effect of bilingualism on third language learning**

The effect of bilingualism on third language acquisition is one of the main areas of interest in research concerning third language studies. Cenoz (2003, p.71) defined third language acquisition as "the acquisition of a non-native language by learners who have previously acquired or are acquiring two other languages."

Bilingual and monolingual children follow a similar time table to acquisition the linguistic features such as sounds, words and grammar, but they are different in developing the linguistic competence. Bilingual children's linguistic knowledge is divided across two languages (Bialystok et al., 2009). In 1967, Peal and Lambert claimed that bilingualism can result in higher verbal and nonverbal intelligence (Legac, 2007).

Kuo and Anderson (2012) examined the effect of early bilingualism on learning phonological regularities in a new language. Their findings administered that bilingual children regardless of whether they use their second language or they just have exposure to it, learned the regularities better than monolingual peers.

Some studies show that bilingual learners outperform their monolingual peers on cognitive task such as Simon task (Martin-Rhee & Bialystok, 2008.) Their studies showed that the development of executive functioning and inhibitory control is influenced by bilingualism. Bilinguals must control attention between two active language systems in order to communicate fluently in each language. Bilingualism does not affect all aspects of third language acquisition, in addition not all research studies report positive effects of bilingualism on third language acquisition. Some studies have reported that monolinguals obtain higher results than bilinguals. However, a majority of studies indicate that bilingualism has a positive effect on third language acquisition (Cenoz, 2003).

Bilinguals use each of their language less often than monolinguals. It can be the cause of smaller vocabulary size and less rapid lexical retrieval by them in comparison with their monolingual counterparts. In contrast to this negative effect, bilinguals have better

executive control and are better problem solvers in the case of conflicting and misleading cues than monolinguals (Bialystok, 2009).

### **Bilingualism and language learning strategy use**

The studies that have compared the strategies used by monolingual and bi/multilingual learners showed that multilingual learners are more flexible in using of different strategies as compared with monolingual learners (McLaughlin & Nayak, 1989, as cited in Cenoz, 2003.)

Bobanovic (2010) established a study to investigate the differences in use of language learning strategies between bilingual and monolingual EFL learners. The research showed that bilingual students report higher usage of learning strategies than their monolingual counterparts with memory and metacognitive strategies.

Hong- Nam and Leavell (2007) also found that monolingual Korean and bilingual Chinese- Korean EFL learners use a variety of language learning strategies, but bilingual learners have grater strategy knowledge than monolinguals. Tuncer (2009) found that bilinguals show a greater use of strategy than monolinguals. He indicated that bilinguals are more intrinsically motivated in the process of language learning, may be because of their success in learning another language.

Wharton (2000) examined the relationship between learners' previous language experience and their use of learning strategies. This study indicated that bilingual learners use more social and affective strategies than monolingual learners as well as metacognitive and cognitive strategies. The subjects of this study were Singaporean bilingual participants that they naturally acquired second language instead of in classroom and educational setting.

Tafaroji Yeganeh (2013) investigated metacognitive listening strategies awareness among bilingual and monolingual Iranian university students learning English as a foreign language. She contended that the metacognitive listening strategies among bilinguals are higher than monolinguals in general. She also stated that the degree of metacognitive awareness is affected by the number of languages known by the participants. On the other hand, Shabani and Najafisarem (2009) investigated the relationship between bi/ monolingual students' learning strategies. They found that there isn't any significant difference between two groups in their strategy use.

### **Bilingualism and language learning anxiety**

Anxiety always has been an influential factor in the domain of foreign language learning (Zheng, 2008). In classroom situation, the learners are anxious due several factors such as, peer pressure and worrying about others negative evaluation. Also, the learning tasks and activities may cause the learners' fear inside the classroom (Zheng, 2008). Many studies have been done about the effect of bilingualism on learning language anxiety. It was always hypothesised that the third language learners are the faster learners than

second language learners. Legac (2007) compared the general foreign language anxiety between two groups of bilingual and monolingual Croatian EFL students. In this study, he found that bilingual students experienced lower anxiety than monolinguals. He also found that there is a negative relationship between learners' anxiety and their final grades.

On the other hand, Akbari and Sadeghi (2013) did a study on Iranian Kurdish learners and their finding was different from that of Legac (2007). They examined the bilingual learners' foreign language anxiety in the forms of communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and anxiety in the EFL classroom environment. They concluded that bilingual learners experienced a high level of anxiety in comparing with the monolingual learners.

## **METHOD**

This study attempted to examine listening strategy use and listening anxiety level among two groups of participants, bi/monolingual junior high school students. To do this, the corresponding questionnaires were administered and the results were investigated.

### **Participants**

A total of 200 female junior high-school students were recruited to participate in this study. The participants are two groups, 100 students were all native speakers of Persian who live in monolingual city, Mashhad. 100 students were bilingual students who speak Persian and one of the other languages such as Kurdish, Turkish, and Turkmen. They live in a multilingual city, Bojnord, North Khorasan. The language of educational system is Persian. Kurdish, Turkish and Turkmen don't have official written system but are considered as home languages. Most of the students are totally proficient in their two languages, but they are literate in Persian. All of them are governmental school students, and are taught English as a foreign language through the same textbook (Prospect) which is designed by Ministry of Educational System. They are at the beginning level of learning English.

### **Instruments**

#### ***Listening Strategy Questionnaire (LSQ)***

'Listening Strategy Questionnaire (LSQ)' designed based on Vandergrift's (1997a) listening strategies model contains 20 items in three different components: cognitive, metacognitive, and socio affective strategies. A four-point Likert-Scale ranging from (strongly disagree) to (strongly agree) is used to indicate students' preferences. In this study, the Persian version of the scale translated and validated by Ghanizadeh and Babaei (forthcoming) was utilized. It enjoyed acceptable validity indices as follows: chi square (31.25), the chi-square/df ratio (2.53), the RMSEA (.068), and GFI (0.83). The reliability of the scale measuring via Cronbach's alpha was found to be .68 (Ghanizadeh & Babaei, forthcoming).

### *Listening anxiety scale (FLLAS)*

To measure listening anxiety, Listening anxiety scale (FLLAS) was used. It was adapted from "Listening anxiety in EFL classroom" by Elkhafaifi (2005). It is a 5-point Likert type scale (ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) consisting of 20 items. Since the subjects in this study are beginning level students, and the researchers wanted to find whether the questionnaire is applicable in Iranian context, the Persian version of the FLLAS was administered. The results of confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated validity of the Persian version: chi square (533.03), the chi-square/df ratio (1.97), the RMSEA (.129), and GFI (0.83), NFI (0.81), and CFI (0.86). The reliability of the scale measuring via Cronbach's alpha was found to be .83 (Babaei & Ghanizadeh, forthcoming).

### **Procedure**

The scales were administered to compare the bi/monolingual learners, listening strategy use with their listening anxiety level. Collection of the data took place in February 2015. The students participated in the study during their scheduled two-hour class time. Both questionnaires were administered simultaneously among all the participants in their listening classes. Before the participants responded, they were informed that it is not necessary to write their name on the face sheet. The participants were not in the testing situation and they just answer the questionnaires according to their experience in listening sessions.

## **RESULTS**

### **The results of LSQ**

Having collected the data through questionnaires, the researchers used the SPSS program (version 20) in order to find if there was any significant difference between the strategies used by Persian speaking monolinguals and bilinguals. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for two groups of participants' listening strategies.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Listening Strategies

Group Statistics					
Strategies	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	SEM
Cognitive S	monolingual	100	21.85	2.380	.238
	bilingual	100	22.00	2.860	.286
Metacognitive S	monolingual	100	21.10	2.672	.267
	bilingual	100	21.05	3.392	.339
Socioaffective S	monolingual	100	16.66	1.821	.182
	bilingual	100	16.88	2.240	.224
Total Strategies	monolingual	100	59.64	4.974	.497
	bilingual	100	60.03	6.322	.632

As seen in the table 1 above, the means of the two groups are very close and so are the standard deviation and the standard error of means. A small difference is observed

between two groups in favour of the bilinguals. Therefore, an independent *t*-test was run on listening strategies and its subscales.

As table 2 indicates, there is no statistically significant difference between bilinguals and monolinguals' listening strategy ( $t(198) = -.628, p = .628$ ). It also demonstrated that listening strategy use had no significant difference on three components of strategies as follow: *cognitive strategies* ( $t(198) = -.403, p = .687$ ); *metacognitive strategies* ( $t(198) = -.116, p = .908$ ); *socioaffective strategies* ( $t(198) = -.434, p = .447$ ).

**Table 2.** Difference on Listening Strategies between Bi/Monolingual Students

Mean difference	t	df	Sig
Cognitive S -.150	-.403	198	.687
Metacognitive S -.050	-.116	198	.908
Socio affective S -.220	-.434	198	.447
Total -.390	-.628	198	.628

### The results of the FLLAS

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the listening strategies of the participants of the two groups.

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Listening Anxiety

Language	N	M	SD	SEM
Monolingual	100	48.29	10.637	1.064
Bilinguals	100	53.68	13.406	1.341

As seen in table 3 above, the means of the two groups are different and also the standard deviation and the standard error of means are not so close. The difference is observed between the two groups in favour of the bilinguals. In comparing the means of two groups, it seems that bilingual students were more anxious in listening classroom.

Table 4 presents the result of the independent samples *t*-test. As table 4 suggests, there is a statistically significant difference between bilinguals' and monolinguals' listening anxiety ( $t(198) = -3.150, p = .002$ ).

**Table 4.** Difference on Listening Anxiety between Bi/Monolingual Students

Mean difference	t	df	p
Listening anxiety -5.390	-3.150	198	.002

### The results of the relationship between listening strategies and anxiety

The third question of the study sought to examine whether there is any relationship between the learners' listening strategy use and their listening anxiety level. To see whether there is any relationship, a correlation analysis was applied to the data. Table 1 represents the correlation statistics of the listening strategies and anxiety.



It seems that there is a negative correlation between three components of strategies and learners' listening anxiety (Cognitive= -.19, Metacognitive= -.23, and Socio affective= -.27) and the correlation index for the total strategies and anxiety is -.308. Although there is a weak negative correlation (less than -.30) between the components, it was demonstrated that there is a significant relationship between listening strategies and anxiety level.

**Table 5.** Correlation between Listening Strategies and Listening Anxiety

Strategies	Anxiety
Cognitive	-.191**
Metacognitive	-.229**
Socio affective	-.271**
Strategies (total)	-.308**

### The results of the moderating role of bilingualism in the relationship between listening strategies and anxiety

The forth research question aimed at investigating whether bilingualism as a moderator factor, plays any significant role in the relationship between EFL learners' listening strategies and their listening anxiety. To do so, a standard multiple regression analysis was run within which three models were considered. In the first model listening strategies, in the second model listening strategies and bilingualism and in the third model strategies, bilingualism and the interaction between these two factors were regarded as independent variables. The dependent variable is listening anxiety. Table 6 is the ANOVA table of regression. The extent of *F*-values and the quantities of the associated *p*-values ( $p < 0.05$ ) suggest the considered models are significant.

**Table 6.** The ANOVA Table of Regression for Bilingualism as a moderator in the Relationship between Strategies and Anxiety

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2884.961	1	2884.961	20.727	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	27559.994	198	139.192		
	Total	30444.955	199			
2	Regression	4483.869	2	2241.934	17.012	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	25961.086	197	131.782		
	Total	30444.955	199			
3	Regression	4658.592	3	1552.864	11.803	.000 <sup>c</sup>
	Residual	25786.363	196	131.563		
	Total	30444.955	199			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategies

b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategies, Bilingualism

c. Predictors: (Constant), Strategies, Bilingualism, Strategies\*Bilingualism

d. Dependent Variable: Anxiety

Table 7 demonstrates information related to the three regression models fitted to the data. Comparing the three magnitudes of *B* indicates that increasing the number of variables leads to increasing the magnitude of *B*. Hence, the third model is the best model.

In other words, bilingualism tends to moderate the association between strategies and anxiety.

**Table 7.** The Results of Regression Analysis for Bilingualism as a Moderator in the Relationship between Strategies and Anxiety

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	91.116	8.854		10.291	.000
	Strategies	-.671	.147	-.308	-4.553	.000
2	(Constant)	83.658	8.877		9.424	.000
	Strategies	-.688	.143	-.316	-4.796	.000
	Bilingualism	5.658	1.624	.229	3.483	.001
3	(Constant)	50.818	29.845		1.703	.090
	Strategies	-.138	.498	-.063	-.277	.782
	Bilingualism	1.978	10.707	.530	1.067	.144
	Stra * Bilin	-.340	.295	-.873	-1.152	.251

a. Dependent Variable: Anxiety

Table 8 confirms the findings of the previous table. Taken together, the results substantiated the superiority of the third model over the two other models and the conclusion that bilingualism moderates the relationship between strategies and anxiety.

**Table 8.** R Square Table for Bilingualism and Strategies as the Predictors of Anxiety

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.308 <sup>a</sup>	.095	.090	11.798
2	.384 <sup>b</sup>	.147	.139	11.480
3	.391 <sup>c</sup>	.153	.140	11.470

a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategies

b. Predictors: (Constant), Bilingualism

c. Predictors: (Constant), Strategies, Bilingualism, Strategies\*Bilingualism

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study, which was comparative in nature, aimed at investigating the language listening strategies and anxiety level of Iranian monolingual and bilingual junior high school students. The examination of the results indicated that there was not any significant difference between monolinguals and bilinguals at their total listening strategy use. Also, at the specific components (cognitive, metacognitive, and socio affective), there was also no difference in the strategy use between monolinguals and bilinguals. As it was mentioned previously, this is in harmony with a study done by Shabani and Najafisarem (2009). They didn't find any significant difference between bilinguals and monolinguals in their strategy use.

Nevertheless, the above finding does not adhere to the findings of other researchers. As mentioned previously, some studies showed that bilingual learners are more flexible in using different strategies in comparison with their monolingual counterparts

(McLaughlin & Nayak, 1989, as cited in Cenoz, 2003; Hong- Nam & Leavell, 2007; Tuncer, 2009), in memory and metacognitive strategies (Bobanovic, 2010), in social and affective strategies (Wharton, 2000), and in metacognitive strategies (Tafaroji-Yeganeh, 2013).

Therefore, it seems that other factors such as the EFL teaching context, the methodology used by teachers, and the classroom situations might have direct effect on the learners' employment of listening strategies as bilingualism. It can also be argued that bilinguals in this study acquired the second language as a home language without any formal instruction. So they were not made consciously aware of the strategies they employ or should employ. What's more, consistent with the argument posed by Cenoz (2003), it appears that although bilingualism tends to facilitate third language acquisition, it does not affect all aspects of third language learning.

In this study, there was also an investigation between bi/monolingual learners' listening anxiety. Knowing about anxiety as one of the most documented affective factors in the process of EFL learning in the EFL context is so critical (Horwitz et al.). While other studies on EFL learning anxiety focused on monolingual language learners, this study focused on Iranian bilingual high school students learning English as their L3, and compared them with monolingual students.

The results showed that there is a significant difference between two groups' listening anxiety. It was found that bilingual students are more anxious than monolinguals in their listening sessions. Two groups of students were not in testing situation when listening, so it seems that bilinguals are more concerned about comprehending the text than monolinguals. The literature on the bilingualism and anxiety has yielded mixed results. The findings of the present study confirm Akbari and Sadeghi's (2013) conclusion that bilingual learners experience a high level of anxiety in comparing with the monolinguals. This contradicts Legac's (2007) study which showed that bilingual students experience lower anxiety than monolinguals. He also found that there is a negative relationship between learners' anxiety and their final grades. Hence, it can be concluded that the learners' anxiety level may be different from context to context. For instance, as indicated by the results of this study and Akbari and Sadeghi's (2013) study in Iranian EFL context, it seems this result can be generalizable to contexts like Iran where English is the foreign language and the other languages spoken by bilingualism are considered second languages or home languages. In other words, although these individuals are expected to exhibit lower levels of anxiety due to their prior experience and background of learning a second language, in practice this is not the case. Probably because these individuals learn the second language under informal conditions at homes while learning a foreign language officially in classroom settings is totally different and has its own challenges and strains.

The third objective of the present study was investigating the relationship between junior high school students' listening strategy use and their listening anxiety level. The results confirmed previous studies showing that there is a negative correlation between the learners' listening anxiety and their listening strategies (e.g., Horwitz et. al, 1986;

Ghassemi, et al, 2014). This implies that the less strategies EFL learners employ in their listening tasks, the more prone they will be to listening anxiety. This is also consistent with studies conducted on other skills and abilities. For instance, some studies revealed that anxiety can affect the communication strategies and writing style in language learners. In other words, the anxious learners used difficult and personal messages in second language and the more anxious students wrote short compositions with less quality than the less anxious counterparts (Horwitz et. al, 1986).

This study also investigated the impact of bilingualism on the relationship between EFL students' listening strategies and anxiety. The results revealed that bilingualism tends to moderate the association between these two factors. In other words, students' familiarity with one language has an effect on the relationship between listening strategies and anxiety.

Based on the findings of this study, some implications and suggestions are represented as follows. First, there should be much research and investigation about bilingualism and its effect on foreign language learning in Iran as a multilingual situation. If the educational system have more understanding of the differences between learners in bi/ and multilingual environments, they will actually have effective answers in solving some distinctive instructional problems in multilingual contexts.

Second, this study offers an important implication for classroom teaching and EFL teachers. In particular, it suggests that novice EFL learners should be made aware of the strategies and should be instructed to improve their listening comprehension. EFL teachers especially in official educational systems should teach their students how to listen and focus on listening strategies to have a better understanding of the text. They should not just pay attention to practicing the word and grammatical structure in listening practice; instead, they should encourage the learners to actively participate in the listening text.

Third, Iranian EFL teachers' awareness of listening anxiety should be enhanced. The teacher can offer the learners suggestions for attaining foreign language confidence. The teacher should consciously choose the techniques to reduce the students' anxiety in the classroom. This study concluded that bilingual students are more anxious when they are trying to comprehend a listening task, therefore, it requires to find the possible reasons for this phenomena, and to offer suitable suggestion to solve the potential problems.

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