



THE CORRELATION OF BILINGUALISM (ALBANIAN - TURKISH) WITH THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study "The correlation of bilingualism (Albanian - Turkish) with the academic performance of students in primary school" aimed to extract the most accurate and concrete data on what is the correlation of bilingualism, namely the speaking of the Turkish language in the family in the performance of students at school, in order to contribute to the performance of these children at school.

Methods: Since the study model is descriptive, correlational quantitative research method was used. The population of this study were elementary school students who speak Albanian and Turkish in the elementary schools of the municipality of Vushtri.

Results: The results of this study showed the correlation between bilingualism and the performance of bilingual students. Students who learn the Albanian language (mother tongue) first and then the Turkish language (foreign language) have better academic performance, while students who learn the foreign language first (Turkish language) have poorer academic performance in primary school.

Conclusions: This study showed the correlation of bilingualism with the academic performance of the students, as well as the preferences and difficulties of bilinguals during schooling.

Key words: bilingualism, Albanian language, Turkish language, students, student performance

INTRODUCTION

In the education system in our country, there are many factors that affect the child's performance in school. Seeing that in our country there is a lack of studies related to the performance of students, we have considered it reasonable to address such a topic, because the issue of performance, in addition to depending on the school environment, is also closely related to the factors of the family environment. Among these factors in the family environment is the language spoken at home, which contributes to the student's bilingualism. Meanwhile, it is important to take into account the fact that the Albanian language and the Turkish language, as different languages, have their own distinguishing features. First of all, it is well known that Turkish does not belong to the group of Indo-

European languages to which the Albanian language belongs, that is, from the genetic point of view they are different, but also from the typological point of view, the Turkish language is an agglutinative language, while Albanian is a fusional language. This is the case of the gender of nouns, where Husaj (2019a) rightly states that Turkish does not even have grammatical gender for nouns and verbs, and these features distinguish the Turkish language from the group of Indo-European languages, and that this group includes the Albanian language (1). On the other hand, we have the performance of students, for which we generally have unsatisfactory results. Such an example is given by the International Student Assessment Test (PISA) where in all three areas included in the PISA assessment (reading, mathematics and science) Kosovo was ranked among the last countries. Considering the unsatisfactory performance of Kosovar students, on the one hand, and the use of bilingualism among

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these students, on the other hand, we can say that this fact presents difficulties in the students' performance. So, learning the Turkish language in the family before the mother tongue and then using two languages at the same time makes their performance even more difficult. In this study, we will address the relationship that bilingualism has in the academic performance of students in primary school and the difficulties that arise from the use of bilingualism in this environment for students who speak these two languages.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study model is descriptive and correlational, it is descriptive because it compares the attitudes of teachers and students about the bilingualism of students, descriptive statistics were used for their presentation. It is correlational to see if

bilingualism and student performance are related. As a data collection method, the quantitative method was used, which according to Mathews & Ross (2010) is about collecting and processing data that are structured and can be presented in numerical form. This method that was used is in function to realize the purpose of the research.

The research questions are:

1. What is the relationship between the demographic characteristics of bilinguals and the academic performance of students in elementary school?
2. What is the relationship between speaking two languages and academic performance of students in primary school?
3. What are the language speaking preferences of bilingual students?
4. What are the difficulties of speaking languages by bilingual students?

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Variables	Category	Academic performance		p-value
		Poor	Good	
Age	10 years old	12(12)	19(19)	0.000
	11 years old	23(23)	29(29)	
	Older than 11 years	4(4)	13(13)	
Gender	Male	39(39)	6(6)	0.000
	Female	0	55(55)	
RESIDENCE	Countryside	8(8)	3(3)	0.021
	city	30(30)	59(59)	
Mother's education	Primary school	5(5)	14(14)	0.049
	Secondary school	13(13)	31(31)	
	Bachelor	11(11)	6(6)	
	Master's degree	6(6)	4(4)	
	Other	4(4)	6(6)	
Father's education	Primary school	9(9)	5(5)	0.000
	Secondary school	24(24)	4(4)	
	Bachelor	4(4)	30(30)	
	Master's degree	2(2)	15(15)	
	Other	0(0)	7(7)	
Family size	Small	9(9)	10(10)	0.248
	Medium	17(17)	37(37)	
	Big	13(13)	14(14)	

Two-sided Pearson Chi
Square Test
p-value ≤ 0.05

The good performance of students at school is one of the main goals of the educational system everywhere in the world, therefore, to achieve it, various factors are studied. There are a number of

factors that affect the quality of student performance (2), there are various factors inside and outside the school that contribute to the quality of student academic performance (3), here

we are mentioning bilingualism. Firstly, to better clarify the term bilingualism, we have the opinions of several authors, where according to Valdez & Figueora (1994) in its simplest form, bilingualism is defined as "knowing" two languages (4). "BILINGUALITY IS NOT A LANGUAGE PHENOMENON; it is a characteristic of its use" (5). Some other authors find the definition of bilingualism more difficult because some bilinguals are highly proficient in both languages they speak, while other bilinguals clearly have a dominant or preferred language (6). While a problem that bilingualism can cause in a child's education is their performance, because not knowing two languages well, namely the language handicap of bilinguals, was interpreted as linguistic confusion that deeply affected the intellectual development of children and academic performance up to the college years (7). A study examining the role that bilingualism – when a language other than English is spoken at home (ie not the official language of the educational institution) – plays a role in students' academic performance and their developmental trajectories in the early school years. The results showed that despite starting with lower math and reading scores in kindergarten, bilingual children completely closed the math and reading gap with their monolingual (English) peers by fifth grade (8). In various countries of the world, it is assumed that bilingualism also threatens the recognition of the official language, such as Russia had such an assumption and to find evidence in favor of bilingualism Tovar-García & Alòs i Font (2017) empirically studied the impact of bilingualism on educational achievement, and according to this study, oral bilingual children who use Tatar at home are more likely to receive higher grades in literature and chemistry classes, and they are less likely to get the lowest grades in

Russian language, literature, geometry, and physics, thus finding no negative effects on school grades due to the use of Tatar at home.

In contrast to this we have research showing that bilingualism affects language and cognitive performance across the lifespan (9). The effect on language performance is generally seen as a deficit in which bilingual children control a smaller vocabulary than their monolingual peers (10).

Veliyeva (2015) (11) in his article addresses the issue of bilingualism in education and

emphasizes the importance of this linguistic phenomenon in the education process and it is important to create a suitable learning environment for bilingual children at school because it is generally said that "It is necessary for educators to understand the factors that may contribute to academic success in order to plan better classroom activities and teaching and learning strategies" (12). As for the bilingualism of children in Kosovo, as we have the case of the Albanian and Turkish languages, it should also be known that these languages have similarities and differences between them and Husaj (2019b) has divided the characteristics into three groups: phonetics, morphology and the lexicon of language (13). Phonetically, the sounds do not differ much between languages. The morphological difference lies in the presence of parts of speech in one language (such as Turkish), versus the absence of the same parts of speech in another language (such as Albanian). While the Turkish lexicon is still present in the lexical fund of Albanian. Their presence, apart from completing the lexicon of Albanian, since their use for a long time, has made it possible for them to be acquired from Albanian, although every time their source from Turkish will be evident. Even if we were to think of replacing that lexical fund, we would encounter difficulties, because some of them are indispensable in Albanian and cannot even be replaced and have remained as such. We also distinguish the Albanian language from Turkish, because Albanian is known for its dynamic accent and Turkish for its pitch accent.

Then, in terms of the position of the accent, Turkish has an accent on the last syllable, while Albanian has an accent on the penultimate syllable. In terms of phonetics, sounds in the Turkish language are written with one letter each. As is known, the main principle of the grammar of the Turkish literary language has been that a sound corresponds to a letter. That is, the spelling of Turkish is based on the phonological principle: one phoneme–one grapheme. It is well known that the Albanian language has not completely adhered to this principle, because some of its sounds are written with two letters, such as: dh=d+h, th=t+h, ll=l+l, sh=s+h (14). Morphologically, words of Turkish origin, through the Turkish suffix- *llëk*, are: *misfortune (tersllëk)*, *comfort (rehatllëk)*, *filth (fukarallëk)*, *abundancers (bollëk)*, *filth (pissllëk)*, but of this nature, but with non-Turkish roots are also *espionage (spiunllëk)*, *donkeyness (gomarllëk)*

(15). As for the bilingualism (Albanian and Turkish) of Albanian children, it was also mentioned in a study by Neziri (2018) where for bilingual or multilingual children in Prizren, this phenomenon was obtained from social contacts with different ethnic groups (16).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study analyzed the relationship between learning one or the other language first or both simultaneously with the academic performance of students. Since the variables are presented with a Likert scale and are considered categorical variables with an ordinal scale, the value of the Spearman correlation coefficient was taken for analysis. From the obtained results we see that the correlation of learning Albanian as a first language with academic performance is statistically significant ($p=0.000$, so $p<0.05$), then we take into account the Spearman coefficient is $r= 0.626^{**}$, this shows that we have a strong connection between the variables, as one variable increases, the other also increases, so learning the official

language (Albanian) affects the good academic performance of students. The correlation of learning Turkish as a first language with academic performance is statistically significant ($p=0.000$, so $p<0.05$), then we consider the Spearman coefficient is $r= -.500^{**}$, this shows that we have a relationship between the variables, but in the opposite direction, learning a foreign language (Turkish) before the Albanian language affects the poor academic performance of students.

The correlation of learning two languages simultaneously with academic performance is not statistically significant ($p=0.379$, > 0.05), so we have no correlation between them (**Table 2**).

Regarding the preferences of bilinguals, we have the following descriptive statistics results from the statements. (**Table 3**)

Regarding the difficulties of bilinguals, we have the following results of descriptive statistics from the statements. (**Table 4**)

Table 2. Spearman's correlation coefficient for variables

N=100	performance
Learning Albanian with Albanian as a first language	0.000
Language learning Turkish as a first language	0.000
Learning both languages in parallel	0.379

Spearman correlation $r= 0.626^{**}$, $p= 0.000$

Spearman correlation $r= -.500^{**}$, $p= 0.000$

Spearman correlation $r= -.089$, $p= 0.379$

$p>0.05$

Table 3. Frequencies for the preferences of bilinguals

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I find it easier to express myself in Turkish outside of school.	5 (5%)	13 (13%)	30 (30%)	32 (32%)	20 (20%)
With family members, I speak in Turkish, while at school in Albanian.	2 (2%)	8 (8%)	31 (31%)	29 (29%)	29 (29%)
It suits me to communicate with others in the Albanian language in the school environment.	4 (4%)	13 (13%)	33 (33%)	30 (30%)	20 (20%)
I prefer to read books in Turkish.	3 (3%)	14 (14%)	25 (25%)	37 (37%)	21 (21%)

Table 4. Frequency and percentage for bilingual students' difficulties

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I find it difficult to understand the grammar of the Albanian language.	1 (1%)	17 (17%)	31 (31%)	32 (32%)	19 (19%)
I have difficulties in the Albanian language when the sounds are written with two letters such as dh, th, ll and sh.	1 (1%)	10 (10%)	20 (20%)	40 (40%)	29 (29%)
I have difficulty emphasizing words when reading and commenting in class.	14 (14%)	36 (36%)	18 (18%)	20 (20%)	12 (12%)
Many words from the Turkish language are found in the dictionary of the Albanian language and this makes it easier for me to speak both languages.	3 (3%)	17 (17%)	28 (28%)	34 (34%)	18 (18%)

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

During this study, the collected quantitative data was analyzed and discussed. This study documented the demographic characteristics of the participants in relation to the academic performance of the students, showed the correlation of bilingualism with the academic performance of the students, as well as the preferences and difficulties of bilinguals during schooling.

This research concludes that bilingual females are rated as having better academic performance than bilingual males. Bilingual students who have mothers with lower levels of education have better academic performance in school and the opposite of fathers, bilingual students who have fathers with higher levels of education have better academic performance in school. This research also documented that family size has no significant relationship with bilinguals' academic performance in school.

Bilingualism has a positive impact on student performance when Albanian is first learned as a first language. Students who learn Albanian (official language) first and then Turkish (foreign language) have better academic performance. While students who first learn a foreign language

(Turkish language) have poorer academic performance.

Bilinguals prefer to communicate only in the Albanian language in the school premises, while outside of it with family members in Turkish, they also prefer to read books in the Turkish language. While bilinguals encounter these difficulties during schooling, such as: they have difficulties in understanding the grammar of the Albanian language, they have difficulties in the Albanian language when the sounds are written with two letters such as dh, th, ll and sh, however they do not have as much difficulty in enunciate words during reading and commenting in class and that many words from the Turkish language are found in the dictionary of the Albanian language and this makes it easier for me to speak both languages.

It must be acknowledged that this study was conducted within one city and the limitations include the voluntary nature of the participation of students from other cities who speak these two languages.

The child's primary education is an important part of the child's schooling, during which the children must be provided with the necessary help to overcome the obstacles for them to have a better academic performance, in this case speaking the

other language before the official language of the educational institution.

The finding of the study has the implication that speaking the official language first, i.e. the language of the educational institution, then the other language, results in the child having a good academic performance. Based on the findings of the study, it is suggested to include new curricular strategies that will help students who have poor performance, due to learning a foreign language before the official language of the educational institution.

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