

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN BILINGUALISM, EARLY READING ABILITIES AND HOME CONTEXT IN PREDICTING READING LITERACY AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING

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5th ALTE International Conference - Paris 10-11 April 2014

Defining bilingualism is a controversial issue,
measuring bilingual students is an even more
complicated task

different characterizations of bilinguals:

receptive / productive

early / late bilingual

fluent/non-fluent

functional/nonfunctional

partial/complete


balanced/unbalanced

compoud/coordinate

5 major moments in the 20th century that characterize bilingualism and second language theories

- the psychometrics phase (1920s)
- the foreign language phase (1950s)
- language acquisition phase (1960s)
 - Canadian immersion (1970s)
 - the language minority (1980s)

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In the 1960s...

Children who grow up in an environment where two languages are concurrently used suffer some word-concept confusion” (Thompson, 1962).

Immigrant children were considered ‘handicapped’ in their language growth...

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More recent research suggests that:

Bilingualism has positive influence on students cognitive growth and achievement

Bilingual children gain upon their monolingual peers over time

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Bilingual children

- possess an enhanced awareness of the relationship between the two languages
- focus more attention on unknown vocabulary than their monolingual successful schoolmates
- use different techniques to construct meaning of unknown vocabulary such as inferencing, searching for cognates and translating

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Two-thirds of the people in the world are bilingual.

The languages spoken around the world are between 6,000 and 7,000 in just 190 countries

India multilingual contribution

Indian businessman

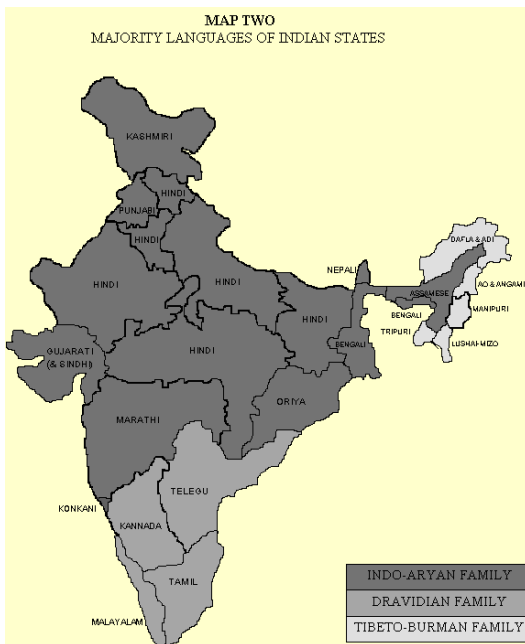
Gujarati (mother tongue)

Marathi (the state language)

Hindi (the pan-Indian lingua franca)


Kachhi (the code of the spice trade)

English



Functional bilingualism

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Type of bilingualism

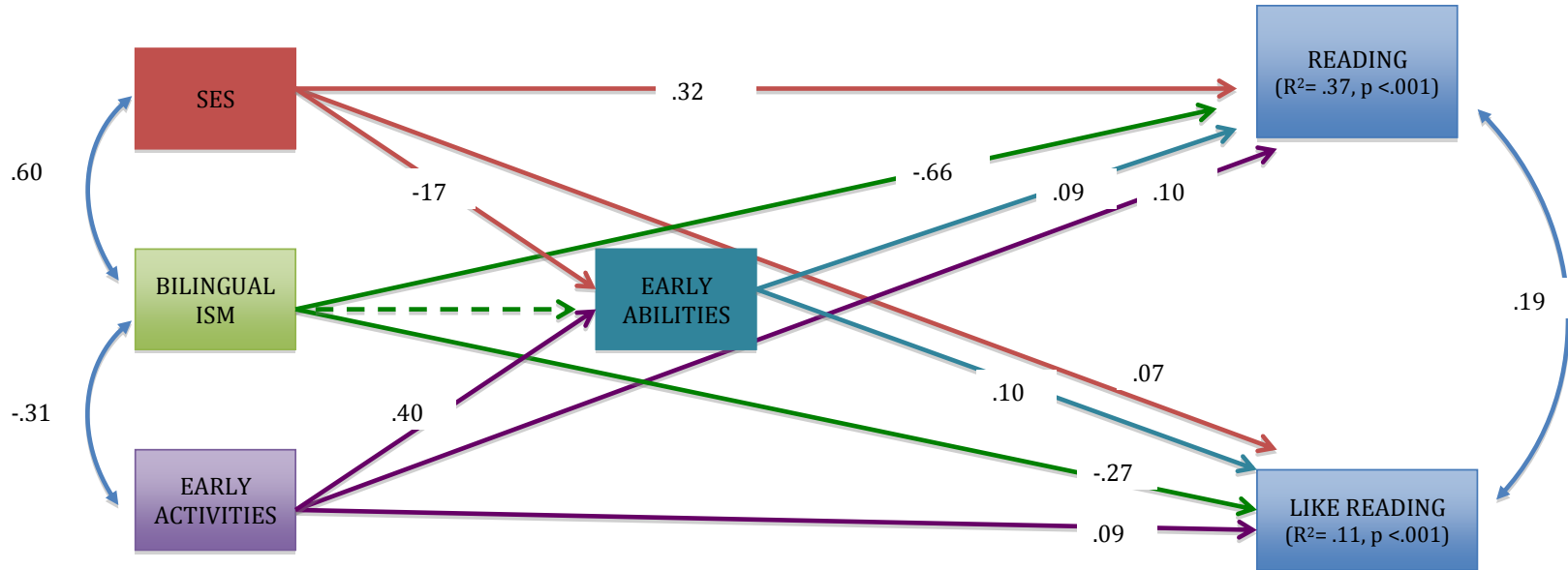
French/English vs Haitian creole/English
not every language has the same status

Aim of the school

consider every kind of bilingualism a resource to be nurtured and not a problem to overcome

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Structural equation modelling results



Fit indices
 $X^2_{(2)} = 3.84; p = .15$
CFI = .99
TLI = .98
RMSEA = .016
SRMR = .032

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In the figure above, rectangles represent the variables, the arrows represent the relations among the variables. The numbers on the arrows are the standardized coefficients that show how much the variable that receives the arrow 'changes' of one standard deviation. (e.g: a one standard deviation increase in SES of students, their score in reading increase of .32 st.dev.)

The numbers on arrows coming from the variable Bilingualism show how much the receiving variables change when students speak at home other languages. (with respect to monolingual students). For example: speaking a language other than Italian at home means that the reading score decreased by .66 SD (with respect to students speaking only Italian at home).

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- In the present study we consider bilingual students those who speak at home one language other than Italian. Data are based on the answers of 4189 pupils (49.6% boys) in fourth grade, as well as those of their parents who took part in the IEA PIRLS 2011 study in Italy.
- Unfortunately, we don't know which is the other language spoken at home because this question was not in the PIRLS student questionnaire. The type of bilingualism (receptive/productive, early bilingual/late bilingual) and the degree of bilingualism are also missing information.

- We can assert that we are not in the presence of the so-called 'elite bilingualism'. The percentage of non Italian students in the schools gives a clear picture of which are the 'other' home languages.
- In 2013, countries of immigration and percentage of students with non Italian citizenship : are Romania (18,89%), Albania (13,31%), Marocco (12,47%), Cina (4,58%).

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Limitations of this study & suggestions for further research:

- ❑ **Lack of language background (L1)**

The home language is an important indicator to determine the 'type' of bilingualism

- ❑ **Type of biligualism**

The lack of this information may lead to different outcome in terms of the relationship among variables related to reading comprehension

- ❑ **Longitudinal research**

Test the same student populations across time



 *Merci*