

Bilingual children have more efficient thinking skills

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Athanasia Papastergiou, lecturer in the Linguistics Department of Bangor University and lead author on the publication. Credit: Bangor University

Researchers used innovative ways to examine thinking skills in school-aged Greek-English bilingual children in the UK and found superior

thinking skills compared to children who only spoke one language.

The [study](#), published in the journal *Behavior Research Methods*, presents a breakthrough in the field of bilingual thought processes. By introducing a radical new method, researchers were able to measure [children's](#) thinking skills more accurately and comprehensively than ever before.

Findings show that bilingual children are on average 6.5% more efficient in their thinking skills than monolingual children.

Athanasia Papastergiou, Lecturer in the Linguistics department of Bangor University and lead author on the publication, says:

"It is very exciting to develop this new approach to the study of bilingual children. I hope that these positive results will help to allay any possible fears about bringing up children bilingually and highlight the benefits of doing so."

The benefits of learning two languages

The research team, in collaboration with Dr. Vasileios Pappas from the Kent Business School, University of Kent, achieved its breakthrough by adapting methodology from the field of economics to the study of bilingualism. The project analyzed data from children educated through the medium of both Greek and English in UK schools, in comparison with monolingual children.

Eirini Sanoudaki, Senior Lecturer in Linguistics and senior academic in the project, explains: "There is an obvious advantage in being able to communicate in more than one language; our findings show that learning two languages can have even more benefits for children's development. We asked children, for example, to remember and repeat as many

numbers as they can, to ignore irrelevant information, and to shift quickly between different tasks: bilingual children were better overall than monolingual children. These results are important for us here in Wales and indeed for bilingual communities across the world."

The team will now expand its research to other languages, with a new project examining [language](#) and thinking skills in English-speaking children attending Welsh-medium education.

More information: Athanasia Papastergiou et al, The executive function of bilingual and monolingual children: A technical efficiency approach, *Behavior Research Methods* (2021). [DOI: 10.3758/s13428-021-01658-7](#)

Provided by Bangor University

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