

# Persian-Swedish bilingual students read and write better in Swedish

February 21 2022, by Per Melander

---



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

In today's global society, bilingualism is increasingly common. Many grow up with one language at home and another at school. In a new dissertation at Umeå University, Baran Johansson has investigated how children in grades 4–9 read and write in two languages with different alphabets. The participants are Persian-Swedish bilingual students with and without reading difficulties who can read and write in both Persian (Arabic alphabet) and Swedish (Latin alphabet).

"Students both read and write better in the school [language](#) Swedish compared to their mother tongue Persian. They read more efficiently and write more fluently without as many micro-pauses in Swedish compared to Persian," says Baran Johansson.

In his research, Baran Johansson shows that the participants write longer and more detailed texts and used more complex grammar in Swedish.

## **Connection between reading and writing**

The dissertation also shows a significant connection between reading and writing, regardless of the language in question.

Weak readers wrote more slowly and produced shorter texts. Strong readers wrote faster and produced longer texts.

"I have been able to show a strong connection between reading and writing for [bilingual students](#) both within and between languages. This means that reading and writing skills in Persian support reading and writing skills in Swedish and vice versa."

"There is an interaction and a dependence between the mother tongue and Swedish that must be taken into account. Bilingual students can transfer reading and writing skills between their languages."

## Difficulties shared between different languages

By also studying weaker students, the dissertation has shown that difficulties are also shared between different languages.

"I have created the concept 'multideficiency' which explains how underlying difficulties in, for example, decoding and understanding of texts are divided between languages."

"A [student](#) who has difficulty reading and understanding in both languages also has difficulty producing coherent texts in both languages."

"The school needs to become better at distinguishing between bilingual pupils who are learning a [second language](#) and bilingual pupils who have primary reading difficulties regardless of language. Bilingual students with reading difficulties must be identified as early as monolingual students."

## School should increase mother tongue instruction

The dissertation suggests that the [school](#) should increase mother tongue instruction for bilingual children, especially those who learn to read and write in two different alphabetical systems.

Due to the [strong connections](#) between reading and writing between the languages, it is also important to better coordinate teaching in Swedish and in the [mother tongue](#).

Being bilingual is part of the children's identity that they should be able to embrace and develop by being able to read and write fluently in both their languages.

**More information:** Two languages, two scripts: bilingual and bicultural children with and without reading difficulties read and write in Persian (L 1) and Swedish (L2). [www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/ .../33374/FULLTEXT01.pdf](http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/.../33374/FULLTEXT01.pdf)

Provided by Umea University

Citation: Persian-Swedish bilingual students read and write better in Swedish (2022, February 21) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-02-persian-swedish-bilingual-students-swedish.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.