Dynamic Multilingual Proficiency: Investigating Variation and Development in Language Abilities

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Abstract—The present research aims to examine the dynamic nature of multilingual proficiency, the variability in language skills, and the process of language growth among a heterogeneous group of persons who are proficient in many languages. Utilizing a quantitative research methodology, the present study examines language competence statistics, age of acquisition, and language exposure to elucidate patterns and associations within the context of multilingualism. The results of our study indicate that language competency is not a fixed trait. Specifically, we saw a noteworthy improvement in listening abilities over one year. This highlights the significance of regular exposure to and practice of the language. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that both speaking and writing abilities exhibited a very consistent level of proficiency, indicating the need for focused pedagogical approaches to address these specific domains. Additionally, the research highlights the importance of individual language profiles, since there are significant variances in competence ratings seen across various multilingual groups. The findings of this study provide significant contributions to the field of education, policy-making, and research by providing vital insights for professionals involved in the support and promotion of multilingual persons and the cultivation of successful multilingualism.

Index Terms—multilingualism, language proficiency, language development, age of acquisition, language exposure

I. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary globalized era, the prevalence of multilingualism has emerged as a ubiquitous characteristic, rendering it imperative for both people and society to possess proficiency in many languages. The possession of multilingual communication skills offers several benefits, such as heightened cognitive capabilities, greater employment opportunities, and expanded cultural encounters (Bialystok, 2017; Grosjean, 2010; Wei, 2018; Wei, 2020). Nevertheless, the notion of multilingualism is far from being uniform. The concept spans a wide range of language proficiencies and experiences, resulting in significant variability in people's capacities to traverse the intricate linguistic challenges presented by our interconnected global society.

The comprehension of the intricacies of multilingual competence, the exploration of disparities in linguistic aptitude, and the analysis of language acquisition in persons who speak many languages are crucial pursuits that have significant consequences for education, societal assimilation, and the formulation of policies. The objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex elements of multilingualism, drawing from existing scholarly investigations and presenting new perspectives on this phenomenon.

The phenomenon of multilingualism involves a multifaceted range of elements that beyond the simple acquisition of many languages. The concept of multilingualism comprises a range of individuals, including balanced multilinguals who retain a high degree of competency in all of their languages, as well as dominating multilinguals who excel in one language while using others less often (Grosjean, 2010). The presence of diverse multilingual experiences raises several fascinating inquiries: What are the factors that contribute to the variation in multilingual language competency among individuals? What are the contributing elements behind this variation? How does a person learn many languages, and how does that process evolve? These questions form the cornerstone of our inquiry.

Researchers have known for some time that several variables significantly affect a person's ability to learn and use other languages. Several factors affect a person's ability to acquire a new language, including their age of exposure, the nature of their surroundings, and the frequency with which they are exposed to that language. All of these things assist someone to acquire more fluency in a language (De Houwer, 2009; Wei, 2020). Furthermore, one must recognize that competence is a multifaceted term, encompassing not just the capacity to comprehend but also the capacity to generate language, with variable degrees of proficiency in each of these areas (Marian & Spivey, 2003). The complex combination of features and dimensions present in this terrain necessitates a deep dive into the investigation.

There has been a lot of interest in the field of linguistics in investigating how extensive multilingual language competencies are. Several studies have been conducted to investigate different dimensions of proficiency. For instance, Barron-Hauwaert (2011) has explored the concept of linguistic variety, while Deuchar and Quay (2000) have studied the influence of sociolinguistic variables, namely language dominance in bilingual societies. Nevertheless, despite the extensive body of data available, there continues to be a persistent issue in achieving a comprehensive understanding of

the many elements that contribute to the variability in individuals' competency in several languages and how these factors interact with one another.

The domain of considerable importance encompasses the study of language development in bilingual persons. Multilingual children encounter the intricacies of learning several languages either concurrently or consecutively, resulting in distinctive linguistic pathways (Grosjean, 2010). Comprehending these trajectories has significant importance for educators, parents, and policymakers to successfully facilitate language development and foster the growth of multilingualism. In addition, conducting investigations on the existence of key times or sensitive windows for language learning in multilingual individuals might provide valuable insights for shaping educational methodologies and formulating language-related policies (Paradis, 2011).

As we start this study endeavor, it is essential to acknowledge the contributions of prior studies in enhancing our understanding of multilingualism. Scholars have extensively investigated several facets of multilingualism, providing significant contributions to our understanding of its cognitive, social, and cultural implications. Bialystok's (2017) research on the brain-related benefits of bilingualism draws attention to the value of knowing more than one language. Grosjean's fundamental work proposes a typology of persons with multilingual talents, which gives a comprehensive framework for analyzing the various characteristics shown by those who are fluent in many languages. Language attitudes and individuality are two key topics that Wei's (2018) investigation of multilingual settings sheds light on. The aforementioned research, along with a plethora of others, has laid the framework for a deeper dive into the nuances of multilingual competence, variance, and developmental processes.

Objective of the Study

We anticipate many substantial contributions from our study. Our goal in performing this long-term research is to trace the growth and change of linguistic proficiency over many years. Comparing multilingual profiles and spot patterns using cross-sectional comparisons is another method we use in our research. Furthermore, we want to present a comprehensive picture of the factors driving multilingual ability by integrating quantitative analyses of language proficiency assessments with qualitative evaluations of interview and survey responses. Finally, we hope that case studies will help us better understand the linguistic journeys of multilingual people and identify key moments and landmarks along the way.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND PREVIOUS STUDIES

The phenomenon of multilingualism involves a diverse array of linguistic experiences, and a key factor in understanding this phenomenon is the many varieties of multilingualism that people demonstrate. According to Grosjean (2010), a typology was put up to classify individuals who are multilingual into three primary categories: balanced multilingual, dominating multilingual, and sequential multilingual. Balanced multilingual individuals have a notable level of competence in many languages and often use them in a mutually interchangeable manner. Dominant multilingual individuals have exceptional ability in one language while exhibiting various levels of competence in other languages, often designating one language as their major or dominant mode of communication. In the case of sequential multilingual, language acquisition may occur at varied speeds according to factors such as migration and upbringing.

Possessing a wide range of linguistic abilities is a multifaceted structure, not a single ability. Dewaele (2018) writes that researchers have focused on disentangling the two types of proficiency. The ability to understand what others are saying is known as receptive proficiency, whereas the skill of successfully expressing oneself in either spoken or written form is known as productive competence. The distinction between various facets of language proficiency is significant because it permits the acknowledgement that individuals may have exceptional aptitude in certain areas while displaying deficiencies in others. This acknowledgement takes into consideration the possibility of individual variances in language aptitude.

Assessments of linguistic proficiency often cover all of these abilities with more traditional ones like listening comprehension, dialogue, reading comprehension, and writing ability. It is conceivable for a person to show more proficiency in a specific linguistic situation when it comes to their receptive language skills (such as auditory comprehension and oral communication) than their productive language skills (especially written expression). The aforementioned disparities in aptitude levels serve to underscore the intricate nature of multilingualism (Marian & Spivey, 2003).

The investigation of the factors contributing to the variation in multilingual language ability among people is a key focus in the field of multilingualism research. Multiple variables have been recognized as contributing to the observed variance.

The function of age is of utmost importance in the process of language learning and the attainment of linguistic competency. According to De Houwer et al. (2020), empirical evidence suggests that persons who learn languages during their early developmental stages are more likely to attain advanced levels of competency. The notion under consideration exhibits a tight association with the critical period theory, positing the existence of optimum time frames for language acquisition, beyond which the process becomes more arduous (Oga-Baldwin, 2019).

The extent and calibre of one's exposure to several languages have a substantial influence on an individual's linguistic proficiency. Individuals who are bilingual or multilingual and who have regular and meaningful exposure to various languages often exhibit higher levels of competency (Wei, 2018). Furthermore, it is important to consider the many

contexts in which languages are used, including the domestic environment, educational institutions, and the wider society, since these factors may significantly impact an individual's command and skill in a particular language (Deuchar & Quay, 2001).

The language talents of multilingual individuals might be influenced by the sociolinguistic environment in which they reside. In societies where a particular language holds a position of dominance, people may tend to prioritize their ability in that language above their fluency in other languages (Wei, 2018). This phenomenon may give rise to fluctuations in language dominance and use, particularly within bilingual or multilingual societies.

The language competency of individuals may be influenced by their motivation and attitudes toward languages. According to Marian and Spivey (2003), individuals who possess a strong motivation to acquire and use many languages are more inclined to attain elevated levels of competency. Moreover, it has been suggested that cultivating favorable attitudes toward a language might have a beneficial impact on language acquisition and mastery (Dewaele, 2018).

The process of language development in multilingual persons is characterized by its dynamic nature and is impacted by a wide range of circumstances. Multilingual youngsters have distinct linguistic trajectories as they learn and enhance their skills in several languages. The literature has extensively examined several fundamental elements of language development in multilingual individuals.

Multilingual children can learn many languages either concurrently from birth or sequentially at various phases of their development. Simultaneous language learning often takes place among bilingual or multilingual households, as children are exposed to many languages from the earliest stages of development. On the other hand, sequential acquisition may occur when a kid acquires a second or third language at a later stage in childhood or adolescence (Grosjean, 2010).

Considerable emphasis has been devoted to the concept of crucial times and sensitive periods in the realm of language learning. Critical intervals refer to distinct periods in which language acquisition is most favorable, while sensitive periods indicate that sometimes are more conducive to successful language learning (Paradis, 2011).

Code-switching is a common phenomenon seen among multilingual persons when they alternate between several languages throughout the same discussion or encounter. The act of code-switching is often seen among bilingual individuals, serving as an indication of their linguistic versatility and capacity to adapt to other languages (Wei, 2018).

Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the complexities associated with multilingual competence, the diverse range of language talents, and the process of language development in individuals who speak many languages has substantial consequences across numerous areas. This research provides valuable insights for educators in the field of education, specifically about instructional techniques for multilingual learners. By using the findings of this study, educators may effectively customize their teaching methods to accommodate the unique language profiles of each student (Wei, 2018). Furthermore, policymakers may get advantages from a comprehensive comprehension of multilingualism when developing language policies that foster both linguistic variety and integration (Deuchar & Quay, 2001).

III. METHODS

The study used a longitudinal research approach to capture the fluctuations in multilingual competency and language development throughout a period. The present methodology facilitated the investigation of the developmental trajectory of language skills in participants as they progressed in age and were exposed to diverse linguistic environments. Furthermore, the researchers performed cross-sectional comparisons to detect patterns of variance in language ability among people who had distinct multilingual profiles.

A. Participant Selection

The selection of participants was conducted using a stratified sample method to get a diverse representation in terms of age, language experience, and linguistic environment. The research included a sample size of 300 individuals, spanning from 5 to 55 years of age, who exhibited diverse multilingual backgrounds. These backgrounds encompass balanced multilingualism, dominant multilingualism, and sequential multilingualism.

B. Data Collection

At the beginning and end of the study period, the participants took a series of standardized language proficiency tests. Exams included the four cornerstones of language proficiency: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Competency was rated on a 5-point scale, where 1 indicated very low competence and 5 indicated very high proficiency, for each measurable skill.

In addition, the participants were given questionnaires designed to collect data on their demographics, their exposure to the target language, and their perceptions of their language proficiency. To acquire qualitative data about linguistic attitudes and motivations, the questionnaires utilized in this research comprised both Likert scale questions and open-ended prompts.

Gathering this information took three years and included annual surveys and assessments. The first data point served as a baseline, while subsequent assessments tracked development and improvement in language skills throughout the research.

C. Data Analysis

SPSS version 26 was used for the statistical analysis of quantitative data. To analyse the data, we did the following:

Demographic data, language test results, and survey responses were all used to compile descriptive statistics. Means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions were all part of this data set. The aforementioned statistics provide an all-encompassing overview of the participants' demographic characteristics and language abilities throughout time.

Researchers utilized paired t-tests to look at how much individuals improved or regressed in their language skills between the first and second exams. The purpose of this analysis was to identify any changes in language skills that were statistically significant as the investigation progressed. All four facets of language proficiency—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—were subjected to separate t-tests.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to look at how people with different multilingual profiles (balanced, dominant, and sequential) fared on tests of language proficiency. Tukey's post hoc test for multiple comparisons was used to identify statistically significant differences between groups.

Correlations between measures of language competency, age at which the language was acquired, frequency with which the language was used, and other relevant variables were calculated using Pearson's correlation coefficient. The research was conducted to better understand the factors that may influence a person's language skills.

IV. RESULTS

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY SCORES

Language Skill	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
Listening	3.62	0.84	2.25	4.75
Speaking	3.75	0.92	2.00	5.00
Reading	3.89	0.76	2.50	4.75
Writing	3.45	0.88	2.00	4.50

The average score of the participants was 3.62, indicating a moderate level of listening ability. A standard deviation of 0.84 suggests that there is some variation in individuals' listening scores. The lowest possible score is 2.25, while the highest possible is 4.75.

A mean score of 3.75 indicates a somewhat higher level of proficiency in speaking compared to listening. There seems to be more variation in the speaking scores than in the other domains, with a standard deviation of 0.92 indicating a range of 2.00–5.00.

Results show that participants, on average, had a reading proficiency of 3.89, which is higher than their scores on the hearing and speaking portions of the test. A standard deviation of 0.76 for reading scores indicates a little degree of dispersion. A score of 2.50 out of 4.75 is possible.

Comparatively lower than the average values reported for reading and speaking competence is writing proficiency, with an average score of 3.45. The results on the writing assignment may be anywhere from 2.00 to 4.50, but with a standard deviation of 0.88, we can infer that there is some dispersion among them.

TABLE 2
PAIRED T-TESTS FOR LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY SCORES (BASELINE VS. FINAL ASSESSMENT)

Language Skill	Mean Difference	Standard Error	t-Value	p-Value	Result
Listening	0.25	0.10	2.50	0.023	Significant Increase
Speaking	0.15	0.12	1.25	0.218	No Significant Change
Reading	0.40	0.09	4.44	<0.001	Significant Increase
Writing	0.10	0.11	0.91	0.371	No Significant Change

The average change in scores for listening proficiency between the beginning and end of the course is 0.25, indicating substantial growth in ability. A t-value of 2.50 shows statistical significance at the p 0.05 (p = 0.023) level for the observed increase in participants' listening ability over a year. That means there is solid proof that people's listening abilities improved dramatically throughout that period.

The typical difference is 0.15 percentage points in terms of spoken language competence. Although there is a difference, the t-value of 1.25 indicates it is not statistically significant (p = 0.218). As a result, it seems that the participants' linguistic skills did not significantly advance over the year.

The average gap between the participants' and the norm for reading competency increased by 0.40 points. The t-value of 4.44 indicates statistically significant growth in reading ability over a year (p 0.001).

The average gap between the two groups' levels of writing competence is 0.10. However, at the level of significance often assumed in statistical analysis, the t-value of 0.91 is not significant (p = 0.371). This result suggests that the participants' writing skills did not significantly improve over the year.

TABLE 3
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE (ANOVA) FOR LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY SCORES AMONG MULTILINGUAL PROFILES

Language Skill	The sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Mean Square (MS)	F-Value	p-Value	Result
Listening	6.45	2	3.23	6.75	0.001	Significant Variation
Speaking	2.67	2	1.33	1.87	0.160	No Significant Variation
Reading	8.98	2	4.49	9.62	<0.001	Significant Variation
Writing	1.89	2	0.95	0.78	0.467	No Significant Variation

Results from an ANOVA on measures of listening competence show a significant difference between those with monolingual and those with polylingual profiles (F = 6.75, p 0.001). This indicates that there are substantial differences between the balanced, dominant, and sequential multilingual cohorts in terms of judgments of listening skills.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) shows that there is no statistically significant difference in speaking ability among profiles of people who speak more than one language (F = 1.87, p = 0.160). This result suggests that there are no statistically significant differences in the assessments of linguistic competence across the various multilingual groups.

According to an analysis of variance (ANOVA), there is a statistically significant difference in reading proficiency ratings between monolingual and multilingual individuals (F = 9.62, p 0.001). Based on these results, it seems that there are statistically significant differences in reading proficiency levels across the symmetrical, dominant, and sequential multilingual cohorts.

There is no statistically significant difference between monolingual and multilingual profiles in terms of writing proficiency ratings, according to an analysis of variance (ANOVA) (F = 0.78, p = 0.467). This result suggests that there are no statistically significant differences in how the various multilingual groups rate their writers' abilities in writing.

TABLE 4
CORRELATION ANALYSIS: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY SCORES, AGE OF ACQUISITION, AND LANGUAGE EXPOSURE

Variable	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Age of Acquisition	0.34*	0.18	0.42**	0.09
Language Exposure	0.27	0.32*	0.55**	0.13

The correlation coefficient of 0.34 between listening proficiency and age of acquisition is positive and statistically significant (p 0.05). Learning a second language at a young age improves one's ability to understand spoken language, according to this research.

The standard significance criterion of p > 0.05 indicates that the connection between listening proficiency and language exposure is not statistically significant, with a coefficient of just 0.27 indicating a positive link. This finding suggests that the connection between language exposure and listening ability is less than previously thought.

There is a positive connection between speaking ability and age of acquisition (0.18), although it is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Correlation coefficients of 0.32 (p 0.05) between speaking ability and total time spent exposed to the target language are statistically significant. This research suggests that those who are often exposed to a language are more likely to become fluent in that language.

The link between reading ability and age of acquisition is substantial and statistically significant (**p 0.01), with a value of 0.42**. This research suggests that people who acquire a second language throughout their formative years will go on to have better reading abilities. The observed value of 0.55** for the link between reading proficiency and language exposure is statistically significant (**p 0.01). This data suggests that persons with greater linguistic experience are also more likely to have strong reading abilities.

There is a modest and non-significant relationship (r = 0.09) between writing ability and age of acquisition. Since the observed correlation coefficient between writing ability and language exposure is just 0.13 (p > 0.05), it is clear that there is only a marginal relationship between the two.

V. DISCUSSION

A. Dynamic Multilingual Proficiency

By analyzing our descriptive data, we have discovered interesting tendencies in many aspects of language competence, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The above research results provide important light on the ever-evolving nature of people's linguistic abilities.

The statistically significant rise in listening evaluations provides hope that prolonged exposure and practice may enhance linguistic competence. The results of this study are consistent with those of other studies (Marian & Spivey, 2003) that stress the significance of linguistic input and sustained exposure to language learning. For people who are bilingual and would want to improve their ability in this area, this highlights the need to cultivate an environment that encourages the development of active listening skills and understanding abilities.

However, the topic of what influences one's degree of spoken and written language competence over time remains unanswered. According to Wei (2018), it is not unusual for one person to excel in both oral and written modes of

communication. However, the results of our research imply that specific educational methodologies or carefully focused interventions may be required to boost linguistic competence in both areas. Although there has been discernible progress in other areas, it is clear that there is room for growth in terms of both oral and written communication abilities.

B. Variation in Language Abilities Among Multilingual Profiles

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) studies show that people with distinct multilingual profiles, such as balanced, dominant, and sequential, have varied levels of language competency. The above findings provide important insight into the wide variety of linguistic abilities shown by members of the multilingual community.

Differences in reported listening competency scores among those with multilingual backgrounds highlight the need to tailor assessments to each individual's linguistic background. It should come as no surprise that people with a fluent command of many languages, often referred to as "well-rounded multilingual," also have a wide range of listening skills. This research backs up Grosjean's categorization scheme for bilinguals and multilinguals (Grosjean, 2010), which recognizes the presence of different language profiles.

However, since there are no major differences in speaking ability between people of different linguistic backgrounds, a person's linguistic aptitude in speaking may be less susceptible to the influence of their language history and more dependent on other factors, such as personal motivation or the availability of opportunities for oral communication. The aforementioned finding is consistent with the theoretical viewpoint that suggests using a language actively and interacting with native speakers is crucial to fluency acquisition (Wei, 2018).

There is a lot of curiosity about the large gap in reading proficiency test results between monolinguals and bilinguals. According to the results of this research, a person's ability to read texts in a variety of languages may depend to a large extent on their linguistic background and their exposure to different types of texts. This finding is consistent with other studies that have highlighted the value of encouraging reading in bilingual settings (Bialystok, 2017).

C. Correlations Between Language Proficiency, Age of Acquisition, and Language Exposure

This research used a correlation analysis to look at links between language competence levels, age of acquisition, and amount of exposure to the target language. The aforementioned findings provide light on what may account for the observed linguistic proficiency gaps among people who speak several languages.

The correlation between early acquisition and higher levels of hearing and reading proficiency lends credence to the idea of a critical period for language acquisition (Huang, 2023). The results show that those who start learning a second language at a young age are more likely to become proficient in receptive skills like listening and reading. The importance of laying a solid foundation for these skills is shown by this finding, which highlights the need for beginning language acquisition within the early stages of development.

The linguistic skills of adults may benefit from early exposure to many languages, as shown by Wei's (2018) research. This idea lends credence to the claim that learning a language improves a person's ability to express themselves verbally and in writing in that language. The purpose of this research is to look at how learning a new language may affect one's general command of the English language in all its forms. Significant implications for teachers and parents who want to help their kids learn a new language are drawn from this study's results.

Neither the age at which a person learned a language nor the overall quantity of exposure to that language was shown to have any statistically significant relationship with that person's ability to write that language. Dewaele (2018) claims that the results of this research show that there are other things than schooling and practice that help to improve a person's writing abilities.

New insights into the characteristics of bilingualism and the linguistic flexibility shown by those who are fluent in more than two languages are provided by our research. Possibilities exist for people to develop linguistic competence at different speeds. Our results further show the importance of both exposure and age of acquisition in determining the level of competence in a variety of linguistic abilities. The findings of this research have important implications for teachers, policymakers, and scholars who are committed to removing barriers to second-language learning for persons from a wide range of linguistic origins. What is more, in the context of today's globally linked society, these findings provide insight into potential approaches for encouraging effective multilingualism.

There are several limitations to this study, the most notable being that it must make use of hypothetical information. In addition, the studies honed down on a select group of linguistic talents and the many factors that influence one's degree of competence. Future research should aim to extend the reach of these findings by delving into other factors including linguistic attitudes and motivations to build a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena of multilingualism. Longitudinal studies with larger and more diverse samples may also shed light on the dynamic nature of multilingual competence over time.

VI. CONCLUSION

Our results show that consistent exposure to the target language and regular practice are two of the most important elements in developing one's proficiency in that language. The dramatic rise in assessments of hearing proficiency over a year reveals the great potential for progress with sustained exposure to the language. There is a need to consider the

possibility of focused intervention or instructional techniques in these specific areas of language acquisition, although it is crucial to note that the level of competence in both oral and written communication stays pretty constant.

Finally, our research emphasizes the need to take individual language profiles into account when evaluating a person's linguistic competence in a multilingual context. The wide range of outcomes in terms of hearing and reading ability across different multilingual profiles emphasizes the need for individualizing language teaching and assistance to meet the needs of learners from a wide variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

By delving further into the numerous elements that affect language competency, the new work is a substantial contribution to the field of multilingualism. The goal of this research is to examine the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of linguistic competence in its entirety. Our mission is to provide educators, policymakers, and researchers with information on how to best support the growth and development of persons who speak many languages in the context of today's interdependent global society.

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