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Working memory and multiple language proficiency

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Abstract

The aim of the proposed study was to investigate the relationship between proficiency in multiple languages and working memory and was guided by the questions of whether the degree of proficiency in multiple languages is positively and significantly related to working memory and is there a significant difference between monolingual and multilingual participants; working memory functioning? Two groups (one monolingual and one multilingual) of undergraduate university students were compared on their performance on the Automated Working Memory Assessment (Alloway, 2007) and subtests from the Weschler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS-III). The results indicate that proficiency in multiple African languages may have positive effects on working memory. In general, the multilingual group significantly outperformed the monolingual group on the subtests that evaluated all aspects of short term and working memory, with the exception of one test of verbal short term memory. As such, the hypotheses of this research were confirmed, in that the multilingual students showed generally superior working memory to their monolingual peers.