

Arabic-English Bilingual Language Preference in Jordan Context

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Abstract

The study investigates how the concept of bilingualism is being perceived, adopted, incorporated, recognized and promoted in Jordan. The study attempts to identify how learning, speaking and writing of Arabic and English are monitored across the country. It explores the potential obstacle in preferring one language over the other as a bilingual. It analyses how day to day communication is being controlled by Jordanians; how academic achievement is being achieved through the prioritization of the concept of bilingualism; and how societal activities are being managed. To achieve these objectives, an analytical descriptive approach involving questionnaires was adopted. The study was administered on 50 males and 30 females students at Jordan. The study revealed that ESL learners prefer Arabic language at informal gatherings, but desire to use English language for formal events and academic purposes. The study demonstrated differences between the extent of usage between Arabic and English language in Jordan among EFL and ESL learners. The study recommended the necessity of encouraging Jordanian bilinguals toward adhering to the rules and regulations guiding bilingualism. The study similarly proposed principles of incorporating bilingual education in Jordan educational curriculum. Towards promoting second language proficiency, it suggested designing daily-mandatory English exercises and instructions for bilinguals in Jordan.

Keywords: Bilingual, Bilingualism, EFL, ESL

General Introduction

Language is manifested through basic skills, represented by listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, which can be limited to receiving and sending skills. Apart from the possibility of citing some sentences from the colloquial language to clarify some rules of language, we can stand on many of the negative effects of duality in education from two aspects, the first of which is related to acquiring the language, and the second of which is related to the view of the language. First, acquiring the language of the learner. There is no doubt that presenting written linguistic material, whether related to the language or other topics, will lead to a defect in language acquisition if the material is not presented in the language of the learner

itself, as the learner will combine the classical and colloquial, and will deal with them as one linguistic system. Whoever looks at the performance of the broadest segment of learners will find the effect of bilingualism through many phenomena related to the acquisition of language skills.

English is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world today, and it has an advanced position among the languages of the world at the present time, especially with scientific developments in various fields, and learning it has become a necessity imposed by the twenty-first century characterized by the globalization of the world and the growth of the information revolution (Al-Haddad, 2019). The study considers English as a modern language, and a basic requirement for the technological and information revolution witnessed by the modern world, as learning English helps in cultural and civilizational openness, and keeping pace with developments in our contemporary world that impose communication and contact on nations, which contributes to increasing the importance of the process of learning and teaching English, especially the interest in teaching vocabulary due to its fundamental importance in developing various linguistic skills, writing, understanding, conversation and comprehension (Nasrallah, 2022).

Bilingual in the modern era faces technological, social, cultural and cognitive challenges, at all stages and levels. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the language communication skills of learners by providing learners with language skills that are one of the most important aspects of learning. They are one of the main goals that teachers seek to achieve for learners. Learning any language, whether the mother tongue or a foreign language, is one of the goals of providing the learner with the ability to listen to the language and recognize its special phonetic dimension through reading, writing and expressing it in a correct language (Al-Shabool, 2021).

The concept of communication is based on human and social communication between individuals, and human life cannot be straight without the ability to live, interact and exchange feelings with others, especially since man is a social being with feelings, sensations and instinctive needs that require his communication with others. Language is the tool that performs the process of communication and contact (Istithieh, 2006).

The researcher noticed through work experiences in the field of teaching for several years the continued complaints of learners about bilingualism and the weakness of linguistic communication. The researcher believes that the reasons for the weakness of learners in English as a target language in education are due to the method of teaching vocabulary, and reliance on the method of indoctrination and memorization. This weakness can be overcome through strategies and methods added by the teacher that attract learners to practice bilingualism between Arabic and English language, in addition to encouraging Arabic native speakers to use spontaneous expression and English speaking skills inside the classroom. This is in addition with the fact that the English language is a foreign language in Jordan.

Study Problem

The techniques and strategies for improving the number of bilinguals in Jordan society are yet unveiled. There are some strategies which are only suitable for a monolingual, but unsuitable for a bilingual. Learning through play may be an effective method for enhancing a

monolingual's skills, but may be less efficient for a bilingual to acquire more skills, especially with regard to raising the level of linguistic communication among learners, as one of the challenges of the twenty-first century. Studies related to the use of teaching strategies in the English language, such as the study of Ahmed (2023); the study of Al-Samirat (2023); the study of Abu Manshar (2020); and the study of Hakimi and Abdul Rahman (2019), indicate that adopting modern teaching strategies is necessary and a priority, such as learning by playing in English language, which is a fertile and attractive environment for the student, especially since it works to develop his linguistic, mental, cognitive, physical and moral abilities, and stimulates their motivation to interact in order to acquire knowledge and skills of thought, reflection, communication and human communication, given the focus of previous research literature on learning as an influential variable in the subjects of other humanities and scientific subjects.

The problem of the study is determined in enhancing the concept of bilingualism and improving linguistic communication in both local and foreign language in Jordan; ascertaining the level of bilingualism in Jordan context; exploring how appreciative language teachers are with bilinguals; and examining the methods and approaches available for promoting the concept of bilingualism in Jordan.

Study Objectives

The study attempts to achieve the following objectives:

- To know the concept of bilingualism;
- To familiarize oneself with the preference of languages in Jordan; and
- To explore the extent to which ESL and EFL students promote bilingualism in Jordan.

Importance of the study

The importance of this study is clearly confirmed by the importance of its two objective variables, targeted by the research, which are the concept of bilingualism and language preference in Jordan. By addressing issues surrounding the concept of bilingualism help both EFL and ESL students to increase linguistic communication across Jordan. Studying the concept of bilingualism will not only make the research more accessible, but add values to both local and foreign language in the society. The importance of the study shall be felt by the society, researchers, students, teachers in this field, as well as specialists and those interested in the Ministry of Education.

Study Limits

Objective limits: The reality of the concept of bilingualism and exploring its relevance, significance, values and proficiency in Jordan context.

Spatial limits: A sample of a number of Jordanians.

Human limits: ESL and EFL students in Jordan.

Time limits: The field study was conducted during the academic year 2024/2025.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

With the spread of the use of English as a second language in educational sectors and daily life in situations, it has become necessary for everyone to master the English language. Conversation skills have occupied the greatest importance among the other three skills (listening, reading, and writing) in recent times, and the educational objectives are

represented in enabling learners to communicate in English language through conversation skills and in a natural way.

Khaled (2013) pointed to the Ministry of Education's tendency to promote the teaching of English language learning in its public educational institutions, due to its importance in the modern era, as Jordan is considered one of the most important countries that have paid attention to teaching English language, as one of the basic requirements in pre-school stages, and as English language occupies an increasingly important role in the curricula that are widely taught in schools and higher education institutions.

Studies have monitored the interaction between bilingualism and reading difficulties in different languages, such as Italian, Spanish, Chinese, and others, but there is little research evidence on bilingualism (Arabic and English), including the study by Moawad and Abdelgafar (2015) which revealed differences between monolingual Arab children and bilingual (Arabic-English) children in cognitive functions. According to the researchers, there is a scarcity of studies which provides insight into the relationship between bilingualism (Arabic and English) and phonological processing in students with reading difficulties. This is what leads some families, teachers, and those with reading difficulties to believe that it is difficult for them to learn a second language, or they fear that bilingualism will exacerbate phonological processing difficulties in children with reading difficulties, while this belief is not supported by research, and the belief still exists (Ijalba et al., 2020).

Many studies have been conducted that addressed bilingualism and phonological awareness skills in students in general, and students with reading difficulties in particular. Chen et al. (2023) conducted a longitudinal study aimed at identifying the relationship between Chinese phonological awareness and English reading, and transferring the level of phonological awareness and reading of meaningless words to English among bilingual children (6-8 years). The descriptive approach was used, and a scale of Chinese phonological awareness tasks was applied, as well as a test of English word reading proficiency. The results showed that children's awareness of Chinese phonology directly predicts reading of nonsense words in English, and the bidirectional relationship between phonological decoding and reading in the longitudinal English language learning process was found. The concurrent Chinese phonological awareness can indirectly predict reading of nonsense words. The results highlighted that language learning directly affects second language acquisition and performance.

The study of Oz-Vecht and Degani (2023) followed the descriptive approach and aimed to identify whether the level of phonological awareness among bilinguals (Hebrew-English) is stable in both languages, or whether it differs between them. They selected 29 bilinguals (Hebrew as a first language and English as a second language) and 33 bilinguals (English as a first language and Hebrew as a second language). They subjected them to tests on the phonological awareness functions of both languages. The results showed that the performance of bilinguals (English-Hebrew) was better in English word sets, while the performance of bilinguals (Hebrew-English) was better in Hebrew word sets.

Novita et al. (2022) aimed to investigate the associations between reading comprehension and bilingualism in children with regard to reading comprehension level, in 3 different groups

of 4th grade monolingual children, with an average age of 9 years: 1745 children in the first language (German), 137 children in the bilingual language (German as the first language), and 97 children in the bilingual language (German as the second language). The study followed a descriptive correlational approach, using measures of vocabulary and grammar comprehension, and measures of memory, general memory, and phonological awareness. The results showed that, with regard to the treatment of phonological awareness, there were small differences between the groups, and these disappeared after accounting for the children's socio-economic background. The results indicated that the amount of exposure to a language and the timing of its acquisition are more important for the development of language and reading than acquiring two languages simultaneously.

Papastefanou et al (2021) conducted a descriptive study that aimed to compare the performance of bilingual children on language and literacy measures with their monolingual peers in the United Kingdom. A descriptive approach was used. A total of 87 children in grades 1 and 3 were selected, 47 bilingual Greek-English children, and 47 monolingual English children. Participants were assessed using multiple tools, including a questionnaire to measure linguistic history, the Renfrew English Vocabulary Scale, a modified Greek Vocabulary Scale, and a word reading proficiency test. The study found that bilinguals performed better in decoding than monolinguals, indicating that reading in the first language (Greek) with a transparent syllabus may be beneficial for developing word reading skills in the second language. There is also no evidence of negative effects of exposure to Greek on reading in English and the linguistic language.

Abdon et al. (2019) aimed to explore the effects of full or partial bilingualism on the linguistic skill of phonological awareness. The study used a descriptive quantitative approach, and selected 47 students from the first grade of primary school who were bilingual (Filipino-English) in primary school, classified as full bilingual (their English language is better than the other group), or partial bilingual (the Filipino language is better than the other group). The phonological awareness tests were designed by the researchers (phoneme recognition task test, first and last phoneme recognition, deletion test). The results revealed that the bilinguals (completely) performed better in the phonological awareness skills of English than the partially bilinguals, indicating that the degree of bilingualism is related to the student's phonological awareness.

Hsu et al. (2016) conducted a descriptive study, which aimed to identify the effect of simultaneous English-Chinese language acquisition on phonological awareness and vocabulary reading skills in English reading. It involved 77 Chinese-English bilingual children from the primary stage and 57 monolingual children from the English stage. Tests of intelligence, phonological awareness, morphological awareness, and word reading were applied to some extent in the phonological awareness skills of the Chinese language. The bilingual children showed a performance in Chinese that was similar to that of the monolingual children, which is a remarkable result; the bilingual children only have limited generalization of reading and writing in Chinese, which confirms the positive impact of bilingualism on children's literacy, from Chinese to English, and from English to Chinese. The results also showed that bilinguals have better abilities in reading words, and there are significant linguistic correlations between the phonological and morphological abilities of bilinguals in both languages. The study concluded that one of the positive effects of

bilingualism in learning to read is that it is the phonological linguistic literacy of children in both languages.

The study of Melloni and Vender (2021) followed the descriptive comparative approach. It aimed to reveal the interaction between bilingualism and reading difficulties in the field of phonological awareness. It included two studies: the first aimed to study the phonological awareness of bilingual children in the second language (the first language is either Arabic or Romanian, and Italian is the second language), and the second compared their performance with monolingual Italian children; to verify whether the distance of phonetics between languages affects the phonological awareness of the participants. Its sample consisted of 47 bilinguals and monolinguals, with an average age of 17 years. The other study aimed to investigate the phonological awareness of bilingual children with reading difficulties and proficient in reading. Its sample consisted of 178 children, average age 17 years, divided into four groups: 24 monolingual Italian children with reading difficulties, 37 monolingual Italian children proficient in reading, 24 bilingual Italian children whose second language is Italian, with reading difficulties, and 37 bilingual Italian children proficient in reading. Various tests were applied to assess reading skills, and the tasks were taken from the general memory test battery for children. The results indicated that there were no differences between the groups in the first study, and no effects of bilingualism on reading difficulties in the areas of phonological awareness were found in the second study, and these results confirm that bilingualism does not negatively affect reading performance.

In the same context, Ijalba et al. (2020) conducted a descriptive study of three cases of bilinguals (Spanish-English) with reading difficulties, to reveal the effect of weak phonological and orthographic awareness on reading in bilinguals. The study included 3 participants, two in the fifth grade, aged 17 and 11 years, and the third participant in the fourth grade, aged 18 years. The tests were administered in Spanish to assess reading of meaningless and non-meaningful words, reading accuracy, fluency, phonological awareness, and rapid automatic naming. The participants showed deficits, with lower performance in phonological encoding of non-meaningful words, lower reading fluency, and reading comprehension at an intermediate level.

From the above, the current study is distinguished from previous research that studied different languages under the concept of bilingualism; in that the current study is unique in adopting the field application in Jordan; and it specialized in Arabic-English bilingual language preference in Jordan.

Methodology and Procedures

Study Method

This study follows the descriptive method in its research methodology through the following:

- The analytical description method for the study framework and presentation of previous literature.
- The field survey method to investigate bilinguals in Jordan.

Bilingualism

There are multiple definitions of the concept of bilingualism. Although there are common points among these definitions, they are, by nature, not identical due to the difference in this

topic from multiple angles. Vygotsky assumed that bilingualism gives children more flexibility in naming things, children perceive the relationship between names and things as arbitrary (Musa and Kattan, 1986). Bilingualism has been defined as “the ability of the learner to master two or more languages with no interference in linguistic processes and the focus is on the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing” (Cummins, 1986). Another definition is from Al-Qaid and Mujahid (1991) who see that a bilingual person “is the one who masters a dual language to a degree equivalent to his native language and can use both languages with the same effect and level in all circumstances. These are two definitions that start from the perspective of the person or individual learning his ability to use a dual language in addition to his mother tongue, which he learns from. It can be described as bilingualism. Bilingualism is more about the person or individual and whether he is able to use his language as a tool of communication with different individuals and cultures. Bilingual learning, in our broadest sense, is a student who uses his first language at home and learns through the second language at school. Their learning may occur in a variety of educational contexts.

Bilingual Education

Bilingual education is an educational program designed for children with limited ability to speak a foreign language in the primary stage, taking into account the years of schooling in which the program is implemented. This education may be to the degree that allows the student to master dual language effectively through educational program" (Valada & Fillmor, 1987, 1654). Al-Qaid, Ibrahim and Muhammad (1995) added that it is an educational system that uses two different languages to teach the curriculum, and the first language of instruction is usually one of these languages. This term does not include any educational system that uses only one language, even if it differs from the first language of instruction. The basis is that the student receives a bilingual education and becomes bilingual, even if the school system is not officially recognized as a bilingual system.

It is noticeable in the previous definition that both definitions focus on the educational or teaching system itself, as its use of language or its teaching is what affects its being bilingual. It is not described as such if it teaches one language. The same is true for the concept of "bilingual education", which refers to the educational system, programs, materials, and curricula. It is not necessary for the educational system to be officially referred to as a bilingual system, as it is sufficient for this system to offer two different languages in order to be treated and viewed as a bilingual educational system. Hence, "bilingual education" is a characteristic of any educational system that teaches another language in addition to the first language, in order to contribute to achieving the goals of individual and society, as competent official bodies specify the appropriate age for teaching the second language.

Principles of Making Bilingual Education a Priority in Jordan

There is a set of principles specific to bilingual education that Jordanians ministry of education can focus on and understand while drafting the educational syllabus and curriculum. These principles include:

Ensuring that the student is an active element in language acquisition	Ensuring that languages are acquired, not studied
Emphasizing that language acquisition is the cognitive development of a student	Ensuring that students build their own rules for language acquisition
Ensuring the environment responds to the students	Ensuring that the environment focus on the meaning and not on the form
Knowing that language occurs when there is linguistic and non-linguistic diversity	Realizing that language learning occurs when there is interaction with the environment
Ensuring that language is considered as a return from general to specific	There should be no gradual progression of language learning, where students extract rules from the data around them
Bearing in mind that language development is continuous	Ensuring the environment is compatible with the student's way of learning.

Hence, language is a set of skills that can be separated and taught individually. They are acquired through the active use of language and grammar.

Discussion of the Study

This study is one of the valuable studies that examined the concept of bilingualism among Jordanians. The current study reveals the differences between monolingual Arabic and bilingual (Arabic-English) students with reading difficulties - who acquire two different alphabetic languages in phonetics - in the phonological awareness skill in Arabic in its two dimensions (deletion and integration of syllables and sounds). In an effort to achieve equivalence between the two groups, the participants in the two groups were selected according to several criteria, the most important of which were the educational level of the participants, the economic level, and the first language of all participants which was Arabic. The educational and economic status of the newborn affects the phonological skills of their children (Catale et al., 2012). By presenting the differences between the averages of the two groups in the dimensions of the phonological awareness skill, the study found that there were statistically significant differences between the average scores of the monolingual students in the phonological awareness skill in the language and the two dimensions (deletion and integration of syllables and sounds), in favor of the bilingual students. The result means that although bilingual (Arabic-English) students with reading difficulties are exposed to Arabic in a relatively way, they have better awareness, strategies and skills to process the phonetic encoding of the language and to integrate and delete sounds and syllables, than monolingual Arabic students with reading difficulties, who have a greater general opportunity to be exposed to, practice and use the Arabic language.

The researcher attributes this result to the positive effect of bilingualism (Arabic-English) which may be reflected in the phonemic awareness of Arabic language. The bilingual students participating in the current study speak languages that differ in terms of spelling transparency, as Arabic has consistent spelling rules, but English has inconsistent spelling rules. It is necessary to focus on direct teaching of phonological awareness skills, which may help to stimulate the skill and develop attention to it in bilingual students when dealing with the Arabic language.

According to the theory of transfer across languages, bilingual children can learn phonological skills faster than monolinguals, so when they are motivated to learn this skill in one language, it is likely to be transferred to the other language, and this should be taken into account (Bialystok et al., 2009; Messias et al., 2022) considering that the current study directly examines whether the inconsistent spelling nature of English is responsible for this effect, or whether it is a positive effect of students' mere exposure to another language.

What increases the likelihood of the theory of cross-language transfer being realized in this study is that the participating bilingual students with reading difficulties attended bilingual schools for less than five years. The age of an individual at the time of acquiring bilingualism affects brain organization, linguistic development and information processing (Souza & Leite, 2014). This result is similar to the results of the study by Abu Rabia and Siegel (2002) in which they found that bilingual Arabic-English children with reading difficulties outperformed in phonological skills (English pseudoword reading, word spelling, and some phonological tests) are the results of a study on English monolinguals with reading difficulties. De Siegel and Fontoura (1995) showed that the performance of English-Portuguese bilingual children with reading difficulties on spelling and pseudoword reading skills is closer to that of monolingual English speakers. It also agrees with the study of Papastefanou et al. (2021) which showed that bilinguals (Greek-English) have better abilities in decoding skills and phonological awareness compared to monolinguals of English.

The study of Kremin et al. (2016) which found that exposure to bilinguals of Spanish and English - languages with varying phonological transparency - can lead to improved phonological awareness abilities in children who have a language with less phonological transparency, compared to monolinguals of English. According to the study of Chen et al. (2023) in Chinese and English, learning phonological awareness from Chinese to English will lead to English.

The results of the current study support the findings of previous studies, that exposure to bilingualism in two languages with different writing system rules can have a positive impact on the phonological awareness skills of students with reading difficulties in the language with the least consistent orthography, compared to monolingualism. The current study also expands its findings to include Arabic-English bilingualism in students with reading difficulties on the phonological awareness skills of the language with the most consistent orthography, which is Arabic.

According to Deng et al. (2019), the cross-language shift hypothesis also confirmed that shifting can only occur in a language with a more consistent phonology and grapheme, but rather that a language with a more consistent phonology and grapheme indicates a language with a less consistent phonology. This, in turn, allows for awareness of the phonemes of a particular language to be a critical factor in distinguishing the phonemes of other languages. Thus, the focus on the accurate production and manipulation of sounds by bilingual children is more pronounced than in monolingual children who develop phonological awareness.

Among the important reasons to which the results of the current study can be attributed are the efficiency of exposure to Arabic and English languages in the study sample, as the parents - or one of them - of the group of bilingual students with learning difficulties in the current

study are native speakers of Arabic, and the amount of exposure to Arabic at home and at school, and its use in communicating with the family and society, are all decisive factors that explain the positive effect of bilingualism, which is reflected in the high level of proficiency in phonological awareness in both languages. According to Bialystok et al. (2009), the availability of adequate semantic resources and regular use of two languages by bilingual individuals has a broad positive effect on language and cognitive performance in both languages, and this leads to bilinguals outperforming monolinguals in performing semantic tasks.

Haddad-Saiegh (2019) also confirms the importance of language acquisition as a major element in increasing phonological awareness in bilinguals. The results of this study are consistent with the results of Ozvecht and Degani (2023), which supported the important role of the strength of semantic representations in the phonological awareness of bilingual speakers, and the association of their phonological awareness abilities to some extent with semantic proficiency in that language. The study of Novita et al. (2022) to the performance of bilingual children (German as a first language and other languages as a second language) similar to monolingual German children in phonological awareness, despite this difference from the direct result of the current study, is consistent with and confirms the idea that phonological awareness abilities are linked to linguistic competence; the study attributed the result to the fact that the amount of exposure to German was a decisive factor explaining the low level of language proficiency among bilingual children in that study.

According to Lallier et al. (2018), what explains the better abilities in phonological processing and spelling in bilingual students with reading difficulties is that working with two linguistic structures in parallel enhances linguistic processing skills. The results of the current study are consistent with the results of previous studies on the advantages of learning two different languages, and the performance of bilinguals in phonological awareness tasks is superior to the performance of monolinguals in different languages. Kang's study (2010) found that bilinguals (first language Korean and learning English) outperformed monolinguals in all phonological awareness tasks, despite the fact that the first group was exposed to the Korean language relatively less. The study of Souza and Leite (2014) found that bilingual children who were simultaneously exposed to two languages (English and Brazilian Portuguese) during the period of language acquisition and development usually paid greater attention to phonological aspects. Bilingual children outperformed their monolingual Portuguese peers in quantitative phonological awareness skills, and were able to achieve performance above their age group. This is also consistent with the study by Shaw et al. (2016) who found that bilingualism improves children's phonological awareness in both languages (English and Chinese). This is consistent with the study by Martinot and Laurent (2010) who found that bilinguals (French and Occitan) have a more developed phonological awareness in French than their monolingual peers from grade four onwards, meaning that children who are exposed to additional early second language learning in a context develop a blind spot in both their mother tongue and second language by grade four, i.e. after attending bilingual classes for five consecutive years. However, other studies found that bilingualism has neither a negative nor a positive effect on phonemic awareness skills, and that bilinguals perform similarly to monolinguals in many languages (Bialystok et al., 2012; Brancalioni et al., 2018; Mckay, 2012; Sun et al., 2018; Vender et al., 2021, Melloni & Lallier, 2018).

The current study does not agree with the findings of Lallier et al., 2018, which did not reveal any advantage of bilingualism in phonological awareness in students with reading difficulties. In addition, the study of Genesee and Bruck (1995) contradicts the results of the current study, as they found that bilingual children showed lower performance in the phonological awareness task. From Grosjean's (2022) point of view, bilingualism does not have a negative effect even in the case of children with learning problems, and many of the studies that show negative effects of bilingualism on linguistic development in children do not confirm the equivalence of the study groups (bilinguals and monolinguals), as there may be differences in gender, age, socio-economic background, educational opportunities, and the extent to which bilinguals are proficient in the language in which they are tested.

The awareness skill is one of the important results that were reached. This study showed that the differences in the two phonetic dimensions in this study were in favor of the bilingual students, except that the difference in the arithmetic means between the bilingual and monolingual students in the task of deleting syllables and sounds was significantly higher than the difference in the task of merging syllables and sounds. This result can be explained by the fact that the phonetic characteristics of the task of deleting syllables and sounds are less complex in the Arabic language, and do not require more phonetic inputs, or focus on teaching phonemic awareness, which makes it easier to recognize phonetic units after deleting them, while the skill of merging syllables and sounds is more complex, and requires targeted teaching to increase phonemic awareness of syllables and sounds, which is more complex during the teaching of Arabic language. This result confirms the grain size theory (which holds that in alphabetical languages where letters are consistent with sounds, such as Arabic, attention to smaller phonemes is relatively faster than attention to larger phonemes, and this is directly related to phonological awareness (Goswami & Ziegler, 2005). This result is similar to the study by Abdon et al. (2019), in which bilinguals in English as a second language performed better in the phonological awareness skills in the deletion categories.

These are aspects that are usually of interest to bilingual students, which indicate that bilingual students usually focus on phonological rather than semantic aspects (Leite & Souza; 1989, Dowker & Roazzi 2014). However, they differ from the results of Brancalioni et al. (2018), in which bilingual children (Portuguese-Brazilian and German) achieved a blind performance on a sound blending task. Finally, the results of the current study support the conclusion of the two microscopic reviews of studies on phonological awareness in bilingual children conducted by Cavallieri et al. (2015; 2022), which revealed that bilingual children can learn phonological aspects of speech better and faster than monolinguals, and thus the second language positively influences the development of phonological awareness.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that bilingual students have better phonological awareness than monolingual students at Jordan. Therefore, it can be said that exposing bilingual students with reading difficulties to both languages: Arabic, and English, simultaneously, through the availability of adequate linguistic resources and the use of both languages, from the age of the regular language, has a positive relationship with the development of phonological awareness skills in Arabic, which is consistent with the theory of cross-linguistic transfer (Bialystok et al., 2009). This study also supports the important role of the strength of Arabic linguistic representations in the development of Arabic-English bilinguals, and the association

of phonological awareness abilities to some extent with linguistic competence in that language.

The current study encourages bilingualism among Jordanian students to increase the positive impact on language skills; encourages Jordanian families of bilingual children (Arabic-English) - who receive most of their educational lessons in English in the school context - to maintain the Arabic language and communicate with it in the social and cultural context to give them the opportunity to obtain the positives of bilingualism; recommends more research towards bilingualism (Arabic-English) and reading difficulties in Jordan context; suggests the teaching of Arabic to focus on developing phonemic awareness from the early childhood stage as this has an impact on developing students' language knowledge; and advises more studies related to bilingualism, phonemic processing, and other academic abilities in students with learning difficulties.

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