Abstract

The specific societal and educational issues in Brussels concerning bilingualism lead to the conception of this work. The increased need to become bilingual in society today, enhanced by the policy of the European Union concerning this matter, necessitates research exploring numerous aspects of bilingualism and bilingual education. This subject can be studied from numerous points of view, such as the societal impact of bilingualism, the attitudes and motivations of language learners, the economical impact of multilingualism, the pedagogical improvement of language teaching, or the integration of people in multicultural societies.

This work is involved with the individual’s bilingualism, and more precisely with the neurocognitive functioning of bilingual and monolingual children. From an educational point of view it was interesting to assess neurocognitive function of children. In primary school, a number of cognitive and linguistic faculties have already matured substantially, but are nevertheless still developing. The influence of a number of contextual variables related to bilingualism can thus be assessed while developing. Neurocognitive functioning is not a new research domain, but innovative techniques have enabled an entirely new research domain known as functional neuroimaging. A number of techniques allow a researcher today to investigate brain mechanisms underlying specific linguistic or cognitive activity in vivo. Although it still consists mainly of indirect measurement, the understanding of mechanisms in the mind/brain has advanced substantially by the introduction of these methods.

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