

Demystifying multilingualism

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Multilingualism has become one of the most important research subjects in Linguistics, Cognitive Sciences and Pedagogy. In contemporary European Societies, there are conflicting attitudes and perceptions towards multilingualism, reflecting two powerful ideologies: 1. The nation-state model: Rooted in the 19th century, it links language to national identity and considers monolingualism as the normal situation. 2. The postmodern model: Having developed from the mid to late 20th century, it proclaims individual multilingualism as a value in itself and an educational goal. Over the last 20 years, the postmodern model has been widely accepted within linguistic research, and an important body of literature has even been reporting benefits of multilingualism for cognitive performance, social behavior, as well as physical and mental health. The goal of the project is to explore a possible ideological penchant in contemporary academic debates on multilinguals' cognitive and personal skills. It seems that the side effects of multilingualism in individuals are overestimated, due to different types of bias: - Personal experience bias: Linguists, especially those interested in multilingualism, are often multilingual themselves. - Institutional bias: Financing actors seem to have informal generalized expectations about the benefits of multilingualism. - Methodological bias: Studies in the field of cognitive sciences and psycholinguistics rely heavily on quantitative methods, and generally do not question the apparent objectivity of their findings.

Projektbeteiligte

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