

Mobility and Inclusion in Multilingual Europe (MIME)

A preview of research
results

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Introduction

Are multilingual individuals more creative?

- This question is part of the vast “diversity benefits” debate, although it has received little attention so far
- If the answer is positive, it can plead in favor of the promotion of multilingualism
- Potential concrete benefits: more creativity in schools, businesses, citizen life, etc.

Challenging question (conceptually and empirically)

- What is creativity? How to measure it?
- How can we distinguish multilingualism from other forms of cultural diversity?



Conceptual / theoretical treatment

What is creativity?

- Creativity can be seen as complex cognitive ability
- Combination of several aptitudes leading to idea production, selection, and elaboration
- Other factors (personality, motivation, environment) also play an important role, but cognition is central

What's the impact of ML on general cognition?

- ML has a positive impact on attention control (filtering irrelevant information) and flexibility (task switching)
- This positive impact is not limited to verbal domains
- Creativity also relies on attentional control and flexibility



Conceptual / theoretical treatment

Toward the ML-creativity link

- ML -> better cognitive functioning -> higher creativity
- However, only a few studies have specifically targeted the ML-creativity link, producing encouraging but partial results

Limitation of past research

- Target specific population (bilingual children, immigrants)
- Confusion between ML and other form of cultural diversity.
And studies have shown that diversity of cultural experience is positively related to creativity.



**Original empirical research of the MIME project,
correcting for the limitations mentioned above**



Data and factual information

Method

- Data collected in four mutually compatible studies (total sample size of 592 persons)
- Advanced statistical methods for data analysis

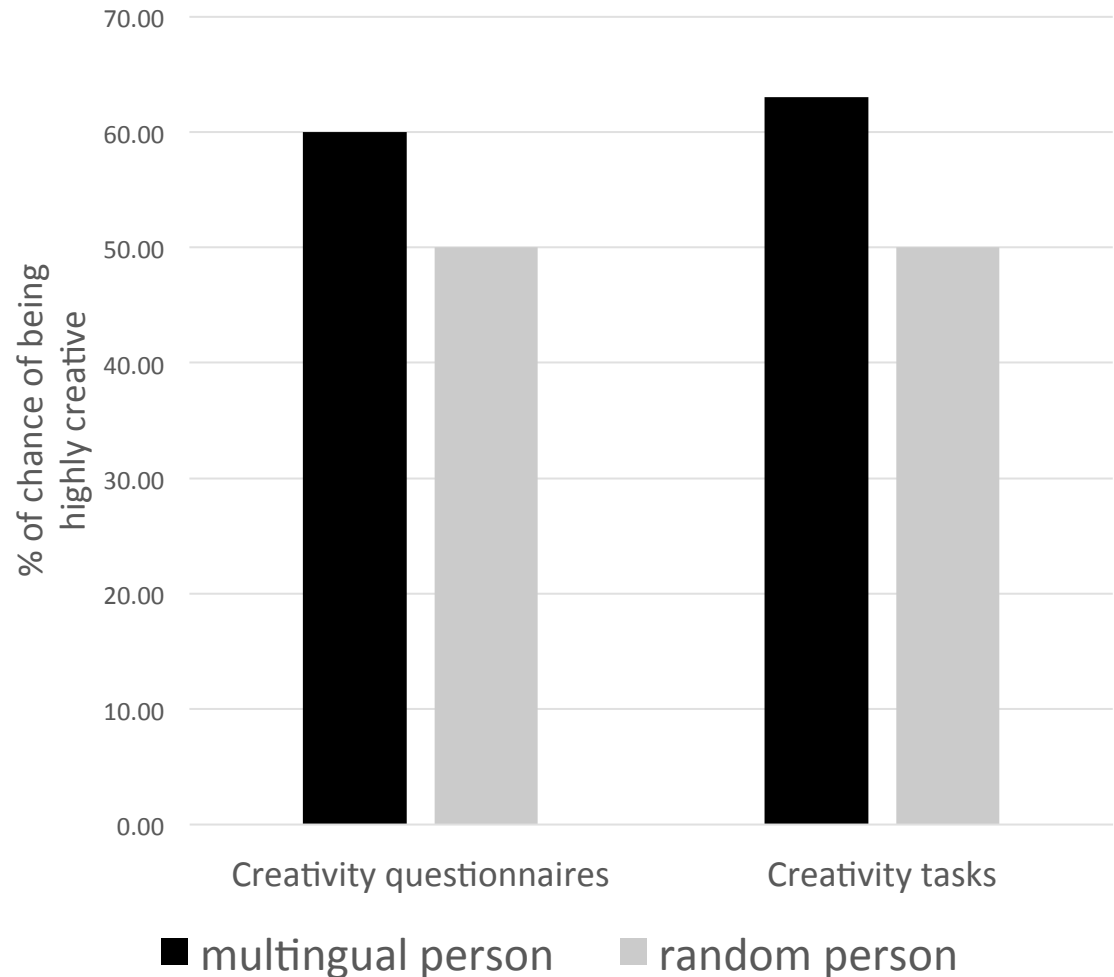
Measures

- **ML:** combination of the total number of languages known, as well as productive and receptive abilities in L2, L3, L4.
- **CREA:** (1) idea generation and idea selection ability; creative activities and achievements in several domains; (2) peer rating and objective scoring in 3 creativity tasks.
- Other form of multicultural experience, such as traveling and living abroad.



Data and factual information

- If randomly selected in general population, a person has 50% chance of having an above average creativity score;
- By contrast, if the selected person is multilingual, the probability of being highly creative increases to about 60%.



Discussion & clarifications

- **Multilingualism is also related to foreign experience;** multilingual people, in average, tend to have traveled and lived abroad more often.
- Additional analyses show that such **foreign experience is also positively related to creativity.**
- However, **even when statistically controlling for other factors, the impact of multilingualism remains significant,** especially on creativity tasks



Conclusion

- **It is very plausible that ML favors creativity** (directly and indirectly, through multicultural experience)
- **Policy implications, concrete recommendations**
 - foreign language learning should be supported, for their benefits on creativity and general cognition, and for the “boost” effect they provide on multicultural experience
 - this effect is clearer for skills in a broader range of languages, suggesting that exposure to more than one foreign language is particularly beneficial.





Thank you for your attention



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