

Abstract

The possible effects of age of second language acquisition on verbal working memory, language proficiency, and other cognitive functions were investigated in early (Hong Kong participants) and late bilinguals (Mainland participants). No significant difference in the verbal working memory was found. Surprisingly, pictorial working memory differs significantly. The Chinese proficiency of local participants was found poorer than that of the mainland participants, while the English proficiency was found better. The findings rejected the hypothesis that early bilinguals would have larger verbal working memory. Another hypothesis that early bilinguals would suffer from impairment on both languages was only partially supported. The different spoken and written form of Chinese that characterized both early and late bilinguals in this study and the early L2 acquisition age impaired only the native language of the early bilinguals. Further investigation on the relationship between English proficiency and pictorial working memory was suggested.