

## **"Attitudes towards Bilingualism"**

### ***Introduction***

The present paper, based on comparative research work on personality and attitudes towards bilingualism, deals with the relatedness of the personality factor Openness (including Openness to culture and Openness to experience according to the Big Five Model of personality) to attitudes towards bilingualism. Starting with the results from an empirical study based on data collected on adolescents from 6 different environments, the author of this paper infers how on one hand, suggestopedia could improve someone's attitudes towards bilingualism, and on the other hand, how higher scores on personality factor Openness could be related to more positive attitudes towards bilingualism and a more effective outcome of suggestopedic procedures in the learning of languages.

### ***Motivation***

As anyone who has ever had any dealings with learning and/or teaching has probably noted, motivation is the cue to success. It does not matter whether we talk about general career success or about success in learning something new about a subject we are involved in for personal or business purposes.

Whenever an individual is supposed to learn something – no matter what it is – the process is rendered much easier and the goals quicker achieved if the learner is highly motivated. Motivation is thus considered to be a kind of force which pushes the individual towards reaching her/his goal/s, allowing her/him to dismiss difficulties and diminish the importance of other activities and data non-relevant for the pursuit of her/his goal.

As Abraham Maslow stated several decades ago, humans have some basic needs they have to satisfy in order to live a life they could consider satisfactory. Maslow pointed out that such needs are organized in a hierarchical manner where the most basic ones have to be satisfied in order to disclose and satisfy the ones at higher levels. To make an example: if physiological needs (the most basic ones) are not satisfied, esteem and self-esteem needs (at a higher level) are not likely to seem very important at that particular moment. The human tendency to satisfy such (and other) needs is driven by the motivation to accomplish the state of satisfaction that derives from a state of general physiological (physiological needs, physical safety) and psychological (psychological safety, love, esteem, cognitive needs, self-actualization etc.) satisfaction. With the latter we mean a state of physiological well-being and a psychological state, where in which an individual feels safe, is content with the level and kind of love that she/he is in possession of, is self-confident and is satisfied with the things she/he does and with the way she/he does them etc.

But, as human beings depend upon a long list of factors and are, as a matter of fact, from the early socialization processes on, strongly influenced by social rules (that are often restraining), no one can really accomplish a state of total satisfaction and happiness where no needs are to be satisfied and no goals reached for. So, we can say that humans are always striving to achieve more than they already have achieved. That is where motivation comes from. Exceptions are individuals in a state of deep depression characterized by a general lack of interest, which can be accompanied by a certain degree of learned helplessness. The latter makes people feel vain any attempt to change anything in their lives. Because of learned helplessness individuals sometimes seem not to be motivated to do anything to improve their

situation in life, when, on the contrary, as Hayes states (Hayes, 1998, pg. 330), »people will be most likely to be active and positive when they feel that their actions are having an effect«. As Musek (2000) states, Maslow (as well as other authors e.g. Carl Gustav Jung, Kurt Goldstein and others) realized that the most relevant and specific aspect of human motivation is the tendency to develop one's own talents and potentials and thus the tendency to achieve self-actualization. On the other hand in 1961, Rogers (Hayes, 1998) pointed out the importance of the human need for positive regard (not necessarily related to Maslow's need for love), which is in our opinion strongly interconnected with the tendency to develop and maintain a positive self-image and a high level of self-esteem. Later Rom Harré (1979; in: Hayes, 1998) spoke about social respect as one of the most important human motivators, arguing that for humans – from an early age – it is much more important to be »noticed, acknowledged and respected« (Harré, 1979; in: Hayes, 1998, pg. 328) than anything else. This is also one of the main reasons why humans tend to affiliate with social groups they respect. According to Turner and Tajfel (Ule, 2005) being part of a social group is very important for one's self-image, whereas social groups with higher social status, which can provide their members with a more positive self-esteem, are the ones people are more likely to strive for and »stick to«. The need for affiliation with social groups drives people to choose a group to affiliate with, thus dividing people in different groups. The individual that chooses a certain group as his own, thinks about himself and other members of the group as about »us«. On the other hand he considers other groups as very different from his own and members of other groups as "them", implying thus a multi-level distinction between »our« and »their« characteristics, »our« ones always being the most positive and desirable ones.

### ***From motivation to attitudes and vice – versa***

How can we define attitudes and how do we find a relationship between attitudes and motivation? As stated by G. Allport in 1935 (Hayes, 1998; pg. 414) an attitude is »a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related«. On the other hand Rokeach (1948; in: Hayes, 1998; pg. 414) defines an attitude as a »learned orientation or disposition ... which provides a tendency to respond favorably or unfavorably to the object or situation«.

As we can see, both definitions underline that attitude:

- contain a dynamic component (from which one could easily draw a relation to motivation as shown by the following part of the definition),
- foster (re)action,
- are directed towards objects/situations.

The main difference between the abovementioned definitions seems to be the way in which attitudes are supposed to become a part of someone's psyche: through personal experience or thorough acquisition. Allport's definition underlines the importance of personal experience (where social influence may even be absent or considered unimportant) in the process of attitude formation, while Rokeach sees »learning« as the factor with the strongest impact on attitude formation. In Rokeach's view attitudes may thus result from social influence or even pressure. As we pointed out in the previous chapter, humans tend to affiliate to those social groups they consider valuable. In order to become and be considered by others a part of such groups they rely on their behaviors, values, attitudes – sometimes without questioning themselves about the real meaning and/or value of them.

It could be argued that the most important part of both mentioned definitions of attitudes is the persons' readiness to act according to the values reflected in any single attitude. When speaking about attitudes, we have to keep in mind that attitudes can be more or less intense.

The more intense an attitude is, the higher the degree of readiness to act according to it is and vice versa: the lesser the intensity of an attitude, the lesser the readiness to act according to that attitude. Since attitudes reflect an existing readiness to act according to their content, it can be argued that they can result in an answer to the question »why people do things?« or simply represent a drive that »makes people do things«.

To give an example: a negative attitude towards mathematics, whether it is caused by a previous bad experience with mathematics, with a teacher in a person's past or simply because the person has heard from his/her parents that mathematics is »bleak«, makes a person a »promising« candidate for failure in mathematics. This can be due to negative expectancies, learned helplessness in the field of mathematics or the lack of effort deriving from the previous two. Self-fulfilling prophecy is the way people's negative attitudes unconsciously influence outcomes of their »apparent« efforts thus lowering their motivation to »try again«.

As already Rosenthal stated more than four decades ago (Bancroft, 1999), people do what is expected of them and, at the same time, self-expectancy also has a strong influence on one's behavior. So, if a student fears failure (no matter if the reason is her/his own expectancy or the expectancy of an »important other«), he will often fail. The importance of suggestopedia aimed at »reprogramming« one's own expectancies with the goal of "opening the mind" to new possibilities and to more positive attitudes towards anything one could and/or should learn should be pointed out. It is exactly at this point that the relationship can be found between Openness as a personality trait (according to the »Five Factor Model« of personality by Costa and McCrae, 1992; in: Furlan, 2001) and attitudes towards any object of attitudes – in this case attitudes towards bilingualism. On one hand suggestopedia helps people in setting aside their prejudice towards anything that could represent a blockade (eg. negative attitudes towards bilingualism could be such an obstacle on the way to second language learning) on the way to what should be their natural "hunger" for knowledge, while on the other hand, it gives them useful instruments to attain such knowledge.

### ***Attitudes towards bilingualism***

Prior to discussing the specific theme of "attitudes towards bilingualism" there is a need to define the term "bilingualism" for the purpose of this paper. As bilingualism (as well as multilingualism) is nowadays a commonly used word, many people take for granted they know exactly what it means. But, as Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) points out, the exact meaning of the term may vary according to the point of view of the person defining it. If it is defined by origin, a person is bilingual if she/he has started to acquire both languages from a very early stage – let's say from birth on. If, however, bilingualism is defined by competence, the focus is then on the degree of competence shown by the person in both languages and not on the period of acquisition. Here definitions may vary from a minimal degree of competence in each language to the degree of "high-level" competence in both languages. According to Skutnabb-Kangas (1981), two more criteria are often applied to the definition of bilingualism: the criterion of function and the criterion of identification. According to the first one, a person is bilingual if she/he uses both languages in her/his daily life, while the second one (identification) refers to the identification of the speaker with a mother tongue speaker for both spoken languages.

The definition chosen for the purpose of this study was a rather "loose" definition based on competence in both languages "that goes beyond the foreign language competence one usually acquires at school". Such a simplified definition was needed in order to exclude any doubt about the meaning of the term to adolescent respondents involved in this study.

The reason why we thought it is important to assess the attitudes of young people towards bilingualism is that a language is easier to be learned when the motivation to learn it is higher. And, as some researchers point out (e.g. Gardner and Lambert (in Baker, 1992), the motivation to learn a language is higher when positive attitudes towards that language are found. Positive attitudes towards a language mean at the same time a readiness to invest time and effort in learning it. Baker (1992) deduced that positive attitudes towards bilingualism mean a positive predisposition to become bilingual. In our opinion, it may also show a readiness to learn a second language. According to Gardner and Lambert (in Baker, 1992), positive attitudes towards bilingualism can be grounded on two types of motivation to be/become bilingual: the instrumental one and the integrative one. Integrative attitudes towards bilingualism (or a specific language to be learned) reflect one's need to achieve a certain degree of social integration with speakers of a certain combination of languages (or with speakers of a specific language). That means that integrative attitudes reflect one's social needs and her/his desire to affiliate with a language community. On the other hand instrumental attitudes show that a person is likely to be interested in bilingualism (or a specific language) if she/he thinks it could gain her/him more opportunities in life as for example a better job, a higher social position etc. From this point of view being bilingual is regarded as an "instrument" towards getting a "better life".

### ***The Big Five model of personality and its possible relatedness to suggestopedia***

According to the Big Five model of personality or the "Five Factor Model" as it is often referred to (Costa and McCrae, 1992; in: Furlan, 2001), the mentioned 5 traits of personality have been found to define and organize personality at the highest level, although - because of being very comprehensive - they are not as highly predictive as more numerous lower-level traits (Wikipedia, 2010). Results obtained through testing by the use of questionnaires developed on the basis of and according to the Big Five model of personality, have shown to be highly reliable even when applied to respondents from different cultures (Church and Katibak, 1989; in Furlan, 2001).

Different questionnaires and scales were developed in different parts of the world to test personality characteristics according to the Big Five model. Among the most widely used in Europe are the Big Five Observer (shortened: BFO) scale and the Big Five Questionnaire (BFQ), both developed by a group of Italian researchers: G. V. Caprara, C. Barbaranelli and L. Borgogni (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, 1994).

The BFQ measures five personality traits while dividing each of them into two sub dimensions. It also contains a lie scale aimed at discovering respondents' tendency to give socially desirable responses.

The five factors and their subdimensions are: Energy (including Activity and Dominance), Agreeableness (including Cooperation and Friendliness), Conscientiousness (including Exactness and Perseverance), Emotional stability (including Control of emotions and Control of impulses) and, finally, the one that is examined in the present paper (for its supposed relatedness to attitudes towards bilingualism): Openness (including Openness to culture and Openness to experience).

The dimension Openness with its two subdimensions: Openness to culture and Openness to experience reflects a person's appreciation (or the lack of appreciation) for new and varied experiences, adventures, unusual ideas, the likeliness that a person holds unconventional (or conventional) beliefs, her/his intellectual curiosity, sensibility to beauty etc. The higher the score is on items reflecting Openness, the more explicit the listed characteristics are.

Considering that Openness reflects all characteristics listed above, the author of the present paper supposes (in spite of the fact there is no scientifically proved evidence of it) that

suggestopedia should lead to even better results in the case of people achieving higher scores on measures of Openness.

### ***The aims of the study***

The aims of the study were as follows:

- To assess the interdependence between the environment and integrative/instrumental attitudes of respondents towards bilingualism on one and linguistic characteristics (bilingualism versus monolingualism) and integrative/instrumental attitudes of respondents towards bilingualism on the other side, where interaction between both will be tested, too;
- To assess the interdependence between the environment and Openness (Openness to experience and Openness to culture) as a personality trait on one and between linguistic characteristics (bilingualism versus monolingualism) and Openness (Openness to experience and Openness to culture) on the other side, where interaction between both will be tested, too;
- To assess the existence of any relation between attitudes towards bilingualism (instrumental and integrative) and Openness (Openness to experience and Openness to culture) as a personality trait.

### ***Method***

#### **1. Participants (Subtitle: apply Italic)**

The study included 486 participants, most of them aged between 17 and 19. 256 participants were bilingual, whereas 230 were monolingual. Respondents included in the study were from: 2 regions of Slovenia (Prekmurje and Slovenian Istria), from the city of Klagenfurt in Austria, from 2 Italian towns on the border with Slovenia (Trieste and Gorizia) and from Wales (Great Britain).

#### **2. Measures (Subtitle: apply Italic)**

Three different instruments were applied:

- A questionnaire containing questions about personal data, e.g. age, gender, spoken language/s etc
- A five level scale (level 1 meaning “I completely disagree”, level 2 meaning “I mainly disagree”, level 3 “undecided”, level 4 “I mainly agree and level 5 meaning “I completely agree”) of attitudes comprehensive of 20 items assessing integrative and instrumental attitudes towards bilingualis was used;
- The BFQ questionnaire (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, 1994), including a total of 132 items, 24 for each dimension as well as 12 for the “lie scale”; each of the above listed sub dimensions is thus measured by 12 items; respondents give their answers on a five level scale following the same logic of the attitudes scale.

#### **3. Procedure (Subtitle: apply Italic)**

All respondents were given all applied instruments during a school lecture hour. The tester read aloud the instructions of the instruments questionnaire to the participants, taking care to point out that subjects would remain anonymous and that therefore each respondent should propose a personal code to let the researcher identify which pages were completed by the same person.

Statistical analyses were then performed and, since collected data were exceeding the needs of this paper, some data was isolated from the multiplicity of collected data and inserted into the tables presented below.

### ***Results and Discussion***

The results of this study are shown below in four tables, numbered from I. to IV. As explained in the chapter “Participants”, respondents originated from six (more or less different and more or less distant) areas; in the tables these areas are referred to as “environment”, meaning that the influence of the environment is assessed. Among participants were bilingual as well as monolingual subjects. In all tables their linguistic typology is referred to as “-lingualism”, a term standing for bi-lingualism as well as mono-lingualism and meaning that the influence of the linguistic typology is assessed.

Table I: The results of a two-way analysis of variance for integrative attitudes towards bilingualism considering environment, “-lingualism” and the interaction between them

	df	Mean square	F	Significance
Environment	5	3,277	3,418	,005*
“-lingualism”	1	0,036	0,038	,846
Interaction	5	1,963	2,047	,071+

\* difference between groups is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ )

+ tendency towards a statistically significant difference between groups ( $0.1 > p > 0.05$ )

Table I.

Shows the statistical results of a two-way analysis of variance for integrative attitudes towards bilingualism for all respondents included in the survey. Results show that integrative attitudes towards bilingualism differed for respondents from different environments, while they did not for respondents characterized by different “-lingualism”. It could be argued that the assessed difference is due to different social status and a different spread of bilingualism in the different environments, included in this study. In Austria, Slovene-German bilingualism is, for example, spread only among members of the Slovene national group. A similar situation is to be found in Italy (Trieste and Gorizia), where Slovene – Italian bilingualism is to be found also only among members of the Slovene national group. The situation is very different in the Slovenian area bordering with Italy, where even the Slovene majority national group is supposed to be bilingual – at least to some minimal extent. Since integrative attitudes towards bilingualism are the ones meant to reflect the tendency/wish to be bilingual for the sake of social integration, the influence of the environment is not unexpected. On the other hand from Table I. we see that linguistic characteristics of respondents (being bilingual or monolingual) did not significantly affect their responses, thus meaning that integrative attitudes towards bilingualism were similar no matter if the respondent was monolingual or bilingual. Interaction between environment and “-lingualism” shows a “tendency” towards statistical significance. This means that although significant differences between bilinguals and monolinguals “per se” were not found, in some environments being monolingual or bilingual has an impact on integrative attitudes at least to some extent. If we draw a conclusion considering the possible impact of our findings on the motivation to acquire a second language for integrative purposes, we see that such motivation varies. The reason for such variation is likely to be found in the diffusion of the second language (the one that contributes to “make” the bilingualism) in any single area as well as in the social status of the “other” language in each respondent’s mind. If it is a case of a foreign language and the respondent is a candidate for foreign language learning, at this point suggestopedia could clearly contribute to decrease the barrier set up by stereotypes and potential prejudice about second or foreign language speakers (in some tested areas

bilingualism is considered by some people to be unnecessary and even dangerous) and about the language learning process, thus increasing the motivational level of the candidate.

Table II.

Two-way analysis of variance results for instrumental attitudes towards bilingualism considering environment, “-lingualism” and the interaction between them

	df	Mean square	F	Significance
Environment	5	7,428	9,051	,000*
“-lingualism”	1	55,013	67,030	,000*
Interaction	5	0,768	0,936	,457

\* difference between groups is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ )

+ tendency towards a statistically significant difference between groups ( $0.1 > p > 0.05$ )

In Table II.

are the results of a two-way analysis of variance for instrumental attitudes towards bilingualism for all respondents included in the survey. These results show that both the environmental and linguistic characteristics of the respondents had a statistically significant impact on their responses, thus suggesting that for instrumental attitudes towards bilingualism it is not only important which part of Europe the respondents are from, but also whether they are monolingual or bilingual. It can therefore be inferred that even the simple fact of being monolingual or bilingual influenced the respondents’ instrumental attitudes, thus reflecting a higher degree of perceived need to be bilingual for the purpose of having a higher social status, more opportunities for a good job etc. As Furlan reports (2002), higher scores are to be found in areas, where bilingualism may be considered an instrument to a better life, whereas lower scores can be found where it may be considered harmful or unimportant from the instrumental point of view. The ones that generally attribute a higher instrumental value to bilingualism are those who feel they could (can) do better in life if they would be (because they are) bilingual (Furlan, 2002). In certain areas those are bilingual, in others they are monolingual and they wish to be bilingual. For monolinguals with more positive instrumental attitudes towards bilingualism suggestopedia could do even more, considering that they already have more positive attitudes towards the instrumental aspect of bilingualism, which may reflect a higher degree of motivation to learn the second language. As such concepts are to be found at the very base of anyone’s self-respect (related to affiliation to social groups with high social status etc.) individuals are more motivated to have a better social position, a better job and life that can be considered “good”. On the other hand, in order to accomplish good learning results for subjects with less positive instrumental attitudes towards bilingualism, it would be necessary to firstly work on their negative stereotypes and prejudice about bilingualism. Following this some work on motivation to learn could be done in order to “open their minds” to a new language.

Table III:

The results of a two-way multivariate analysis of variance for the assessment of differences between integrative and instrumental attitudes towards bilingualism with regard to environment, “-lingualism” and the interaction between them

	Wilks’s $\lambda$	R	df 1	df 2	Significance
Environment	0,8804	6,1787	10	940	,000*
“-lingualism”	0,8754	33,4516	2	470	,000*
Interaction	0,9694	1,4708	10	940	,145

\* difference between groups is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ )

+ tendency towards a statistically significant difference between groups ( $0.1 > p > 0.05$ )

Table III.

shows the results related to the previous ones, but with attitudes towards bilingualism considered at a general level – without a distinction between instrumental and integrative attitudes (it means that this analysis takes into account all items from the applied Scale of attitudes, while in tables I. and II. were considered only items relevant to integrative or instrumental attitudes). The results for all attitudes show that there are differences among respondents' attitudes which are due to both observed independent variables: area of origin and “-lingualism”, while there is no interaction between both variables.

Table IV.

Correlation between personality trait Openness (and its subdimensions) and integrative/instrumental attitudes towards bilingualism

ATTITUDES	Integrative		Instrumental	
	Pearson's r	Significance	Pearson's r	Significance
OCU	,142	,002*	,174	,000*
OEX	,213	,000*	,099	,030*
O	,204	,000*	,165	,000*

\* difference between groups is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ )

+ tendency towards a statistically significant difference between groups ( $0.1 > p > 0.05$ )

Table IV.

introduces a new factor : Openness (from now on: O) and its sub dimensions: Openness to culture (from now on: OCU) and Openness to experience (from now on: OEX). As already stated before, it is expected that a certain degree of relatedness between more or less positive/negative attitudes towards bilingualism and a more or less high score on the personality trait Openness and its sub dimensions will be found. As shown in Table IV., the expected correlation exists and it is statistically highly significant (from  $p = 0,000$  to  $0,030$ ) for all tested combinations. It means that the more a person is characterized by Openness as a personality trait, the more positive are her/his attitudes towards bilingualism. In Table IV., it can be seen that the highest correlations are to be found between Integrative attitudes towards bilingualism and Openness to experience on one side and Instrumental attitudes and Openness to culture on the other. Although all found correlations are statistically highly significant, the two mentioned above excel from this point of view. Such results could be expected in advance since:

- a) integrative attitudes towards bilingualism reflect peoples' attitudes towards bilingualism as a means of integrating with different groups of people, which is clearly connected with openness to experience;
- b) instrumental attitudes towards bilingualism reflect peoples's attitudes towards bilingualism as means of achieving goals that could lead a person to a socially more valuable and more respected life, which can be related to openness to culture.

However, as a high score on Openness and its subdimensions comprehend a high level of capability for unusual and unconventional ideas, imagination, intellectual curiosity, creativity and flexibility (Wikipedia, 9.3.2010; Furlan, 2001), one could expect that at the same time such a person would be more open to suggestopedia, too. It is inferred in this paper that in such cases a person's achievement, as fostered by suggestopedic methods, should lead to even quicker and better results. It would therefore be interesting to conduct a future study on the subject.

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