

Exploring The Specific Nuances of Multilingual Proficiency and Its Impact on Social Skills and Employability

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Received 1 April 2023, Accepted 20 April 2023, Available online 28 May 2023

ABSTRACT

In the era of globalization, multilingual proficiency has become an increasingly important competency that contributes to both social interaction and professional development. The ability to communicate in multiple languages enables individuals to engage effectively in diverse social environments and enhances their employability in the global labour market. This study examines the relationship between multilingual proficiency, social skills, and employability among university students. A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to 170 Bachelor of Counselling (Honours) students at Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah (USAS), Malaysia. The respondents were selected using simple random sampling, and the collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Reliability analysis confirmed acceptable internal consistency for the study variables. The findings reveal no significant difference in multilingual proficiency by gender or age. However, the results indicate a significant positive relationship between multilingual proficiency and social skills ($r = .534, p < 0.01$) and between multilingual proficiency and employability prospects ($r = .565, p < 0.01$). These findings suggest that individuals with higher multilingual competence tend to demonstrate stronger interpersonal abilities and improved employment opportunities. The study supports the perspective of Affordance Theory, which suggests that individuals actively develop multilingual skills to enhance their social engagement and career advancement. The results emphasize the importance of strengthening language education policies and integrating multilingual training into higher education curricula to prepare graduates for the global labour market.

Keywords: *Multilingual Proficiency, Social Skills, Employability, Globalization*

How to Cite:

Megat Ibrahim, N. Z., & Mohd Yusri, A. N. . (2023). Exploring the specific nuances of multilingual proficiency and its impact on social skills and employability. *Jurnal Evolusi* , 4(1), 83–98.

<https://doi.org/10.61688/jev.v4i1.413>

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization has significantly transformed the way individuals communicate, interact, and collaborate across national and cultural boundaries. In this increasingly interconnected world, the ability to communicate in multiple languages has become a valuable competency for both social engagement and professional advancement. Language serves not only as a medium of communication but also as a bridge that connects individuals from different cultural and social backgrounds. With the rapid expansion of international trade, digital communication, and global mobility, individuals frequently interact with people from diverse linguistic environments. Consequently, multilingual proficiency has gained increasing attention among educators, policymakers, and employers who recognize its role in facilitating cross-cultural communication and strengthening global collaboration (Crystal, 2012; Grin, 2013).

Multilingualism generally refers to the ability of individuals to communicate effectively in more than two languages. In earlier periods, multilingual communication was often limited to specific geographic contexts such as border regions, trade routes, or diplomatic interactions. However, advancements in communication technologies and increased international mobility have expanded multilingual interaction across various sectors of society. Individuals today communicate through digital platforms, international educational exchanges, and multinational workplaces where multiple languages coexist. As a result, multilingual competence has evolved from being a specialized skill into an increasingly important social and professional capability that supports participation in globalized environments (Blommaert, 2010; Ghani et al., 2025).

Beyond communication benefits, multilingual proficiency has also been associated with cognitive and social advantages. Research suggests that individuals who speak multiple languages often demonstrate greater cognitive flexibility, improved problem-solving abilities, and stronger executive functioning compared with monolingual individuals (Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2012; Yusof, 2025). Exposure to multiple linguistic systems encourages individuals to adapt to different communication contexts and cultural norms, which enhances their ability to interact effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. These capabilities contribute to the development of stronger interpersonal competencies, making multilingual individuals more adaptable in multicultural social environments.

In addition to social advantages, multilingual competence has become increasingly important in the contemporary labour market. Employers in globalized industries frequently seek individuals who possess strong communication skills and the ability to engage with international partners and clients. Multilingual employees are often considered valuable assets because they can facilitate cross-cultural communication, support international business operations, and strengthen organizational competitiveness. Studies have shown that language proficiency can significantly influence employability and career mobility, particularly in organizations operating within international markets (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Grin, 2013).

Despite the growing importance of multilingual competence, empirical research examining its relationship with social skills and employability among university students remains limited. While several studies have highlighted the cognitive and cultural benefits of multilingualism, fewer investigations have explored how multilingual proficiency contributes to interpersonal interaction and career prospects in higher education contexts. Understanding these relationships is particularly important for educational institutions that aim to prepare graduates for participation in global professional environments.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of multilingual proficiency on social skills and employability among university students in the Kuala Kangsar area. Specifically, the study investigates whether multilingual competence differs across demographic characteristics such as gender and age, and whether multilingual proficiency is associated with social skills and job prospects. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the difference between genders towards multilingualism?
2. What is the difference between the ages towards multilingualism?
3. What is the relationship between social skills and multilingualism?
4. What is the relationship between job prospects and multilingualism?

By addressing these questions, this research contributes to a better understanding of how multilingual competence influences both interpersonal interaction and employment opportunities within the context of globalization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding the relationship between multilingual proficiency, social interaction, and employability requires a careful examination of existing scholarly literature. In recent decades, globalization has increased interaction among individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, making language competence an important capability for effective communication and collaboration. Researchers have highlighted that multilingualism plays a significant role not only in facilitating communication but also in shaping social behaviour, cognitive development, and professional opportunities. In addition, the ability to communicate in multiple languages has been linked to improved interpersonal interaction and greater competitiveness in international labour markets. As employers increasingly seek graduates who can operate in multicultural environments, multilingual competence is becoming an essential skill for both social integration and career development. Therefore, reviewing prior studies on multilingualism, social skills, and job prospects is necessary to provide a strong theoretical and conceptual foundation for this study.

Multilingualism

Multilingualism refers to the ability of individuals or communities to communicate in more than two languages across social, educational, and professional contexts. In modern societies, multilingual competence has become increasingly common due to globalization, international migration, and the rapid development of communication technologies. According to Soler-Carbonell (2014), multilingualism refers to the linguistic capacity of individuals to engage with speakers from different linguistic backgrounds and to function effectively in multicultural environments. Similarly, Nordquist (2019) describes multilingualism as the ability to understand, speak, read, and write in several languages, allowing individuals to participate actively in diverse communication settings. The growth of multilingual communication has transformed the linguistic landscape of many societies, particularly in urban areas where people from different cultural and linguistic communities interact regularly. As a result, multilingual competence is now widely recognized as a valuable skill that enhances global communication and intercultural interaction.

The increasing significance of multilingualism is closely related to the expanding interconnectedness of the global economy. International trade, tourism, education, and technological collaboration require individuals to communicate across linguistic boundaries. Crystal (2012) argues that multilingual competence allows individuals to participate more effectively in international communication networks and facilitates cooperation among diverse cultural groups. In educational contexts, multilingualism is also promoted as an important component of global citizenship because it enables individuals to understand different perspectives and communicate across cultures. Educational institutions in many countries have therefore introduced language learning programs to prepare students for participation in international environments. These initiatives highlight the growing recognition that multilingual competence is not merely a linguistic skill but also an essential capability for global engagement and intercultural understanding.

In addition to facilitating communication, multilingualism has been associated with various cognitive and psychological advantages. Research indicates that individuals who speak multiple languages often demonstrate improved executive functioning, including stronger attention control, enhanced problem-solving skills, and greater cognitive flexibility (Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2012). These benefits arise because multilingual speakers regularly switch between languages and manage multiple linguistic systems, which strengthens their mental processing abilities. Furthermore, Nayak et al. (1990) found that multilingual individuals tend to apply more effective strategies when learning new languages compared with monolingual learners. This suggests that multilingual competence supports not only linguistic development but also broader cognitive adaptability. Consequently, multilingual individuals are often better equipped to navigate complex social and cultural environments.

Multilingualism also contributes significantly to cultural awareness and intercultural competence. Individuals who communicate in multiple languages are exposed to different cultural norms, communication styles, and worldviews. Blommaert (2010) emphasizes that multilingual communication allows individuals to develop greater sensitivity to social contexts and cultural diversity. This cultural awareness enables multilingual individuals to interact more effectively with people from diverse backgrounds and to build meaningful relationships across cultural boundaries. In increasingly multicultural societies, such competencies are essential for promoting social cohesion and mutual understanding. Therefore, multilingual proficiency not only enhances communication but also strengthens individuals' ability to engage constructively within diverse social environments.

Social Skills

Social skills refer to a set of interpersonal competencies that enable individuals to interact effectively with others in social and professional settings. These competencies include communication ability, empathy, cooperation, leadership, and conflict resolution. Johnson and Johnson (1999) describe social skills as learned behaviours that allow individuals to establish positive relationships and achieve shared objectives through collaboration and effective communication. Individuals who possess strong social skills are generally better able to adapt to new social environments, maintain productive relationships, and participate actively in group activities. These abilities are particularly important in educational and workplace contexts where cooperation and communication are necessary for achieving collective goals.

Language competence plays an essential role in shaping social interaction because communication is the primary means through which individuals exchange information and develop relationships. Individuals who are able to communicate in multiple languages often gain exposure to diverse cultural perspectives and communication styles. This exposure enhances their ability to interpret social cues and adapt their

communication behaviour according to different social contexts. Blommaert (2010) argues that multilingual individuals frequently demonstrate stronger intercultural communication abilities because their linguistic experiences enable them to navigate complex social environments more confidently. As societies become increasingly multicultural, multilingual competence contributes significantly to improving interpersonal interaction and promoting social integration among individuals from diverse linguistic communities.

Furthermore, social skills are closely linked to personal development and psychological well-being. Individuals with effective interpersonal skills are generally better able to build supportive social networks and maintain positive relationships. Strong social interaction abilities also contribute to individuals' self-confidence and emotional intelligence, which are important factors in personal and professional success. Research suggests that individuals with strong social skills tend to demonstrate better leadership abilities, higher levels of cooperation, and greater resilience in challenging situations. These competencies enable individuals to communicate effectively with others and manage social interactions in both personal and professional contexts.

In professional environments, social skills are particularly important because they influence job performance and workplace collaboration. Yusof et al. (2025) found that employees with strong interpersonal competencies tend to exhibit higher job performance because they communicate effectively with colleagues, clients, and supervisors. These skills enable employees to resolve conflicts, coordinate tasks, and contribute positively to team performance. Consequently, many employers consider social skills essential when recruiting graduates. Universities, therefore, increasingly emphasize the development of interpersonal competencies among students to prepare them for careers that require effective communication and teamwork.

Job Prospects

Job prospects are the opportunities available to individuals to obtain employment and advance their careers in the labour market. Employability is influenced by a combination of educational qualifications, professional competencies, and interpersonal abilities. Kamarudin et al. (2025) define employability as the ability of graduates to gain employment and perform effectively within professional environments. In modern labour markets, employers increasingly prioritize candidates who possess not only technical knowledge but also strong communication and interpersonal skills. These competencies enable employees to adapt to changing workplace demands and collaborate effectively with colleagues from diverse backgrounds.

Multilingual competence has emerged as an important factor that enhances employability in global labour markets. Organizations operating across national borders require employees who can communicate effectively with international clients, partners, and stakeholders. Grin (2013) explains that multilingual employees contribute to organizational competitiveness by reducing language barriers and facilitating international communication. Employees with multilingual skills can often support global business operations, negotiate with international partners, and manage cross-cultural interactions. As a result, multilingual competence is increasingly regarded as a valuable professional asset in multinational corporations and international industries.

Moreover, multilingual proficiency can expand individuals' access to employment opportunities beyond their domestic labour markets. Andrews and Higson (2008) emphasize that graduates with strong language abilities often demonstrate greater cultural awareness and adaptability, which are highly valued in global

workplaces. These competencies are particularly important in industries such as tourism, international trade, diplomacy, and multinational business operations. In addition, multilingual employees often have greater opportunities for career mobility because their language skills enable them to work in different countries and cultural environments.

Furthermore, multilingual competence contributes to professional development by enabling individuals to participate in international networks and knowledge exchange. Employees who can communicate in multiple languages often have access to broader professional opportunities and career advancement. As globalization continues to reshape economic activities, multilingual competence is expected to become an increasingly important employability skill. Consequently, educational institutions are encouraged to strengthen language education programs to prepare students for participation in global labour markets and multicultural professional environments.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Understanding the relationship between multilingual proficiency, social interaction, and employability requires an appropriate theoretical perspective that explains how individuals develop language competence and how such competence influences social and professional outcomes. In this study, two theoretical perspectives are used to explain the development and impact of multilingual competence: Affordance Theory and Social Development Theory. These theories provide conceptual explanations of how individuals acquire linguistic abilities through interaction with their environment and how such abilities contribute to social and professional development. Affordance Theory explains how environmental opportunities encourage individuals to develop new skills, including language abilities, while Social Development Theory emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning and cognitive development. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how multilingual competence can influence interpersonal communication and employment opportunities in a globalized society.

Affordance Theory

Affordance Theory was first introduced by Gibson (1977) to describe the opportunities for action that the environment provides to individuals. According to this perspective, the environment contains various possibilities that individuals can perceive and utilize depending on their abilities and motivations. In the context of language learning, multilingual environments provide opportunities for individuals to interact with speakers of different languages and develop linguistic competence through communication. Yusof et al. (2025) suggest that language learning can be viewed as a process in which individuals respond to linguistic affordances present in their social environment. When individuals are exposed to multiple languages in daily interactions, they are more likely to develop the ability to communicate in those languages.

In multilingual societies, social environments such as educational institutions, workplaces, and communities often create opportunities for individuals to interact with speakers from different linguistic backgrounds. Ronin and Singleton (2010) argue that social language affordances play a significant role in encouraging individuals to acquire new languages, as communication needs motivate them to develop linguistic competence. For example, individuals working in multinational organizations may perceive multilingual communication as necessary for professional advancement. Similarly, students studying in multicultural environments may develop multilingual abilities through frequent interaction with peers from

different linguistic backgrounds.

From this perspective, multilingual competence can be understood as a response to environmental opportunities that encourage language learning and communication. Individuals who recognize the social and professional benefits of multilingual proficiency are more likely to invest effort in developing language skills. Consequently, multilingual competence becomes an important resource that enhances individuals' ability to communicate effectively, build social networks, and access career opportunities. In the context of this study, Affordance Theory helps explain why individuals may develop multilingual abilities to improve their social interaction and increase their employability in global labour markets.

Social Development Theory

Social Development Theory, proposed by Vygotsky (1962), emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive development and learning processes. According to this theory, individuals acquire knowledge and skills through interaction with others within their social environment. Vygotsky argued that learning occurs most effectively when individuals engage in collaborative activities with more knowledgeable others who guide them in developing new competencies. Language plays a central role in this process because it serves as the primary tool for communication and knowledge transfer between individuals.

A key concept within Social Development Theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the range of tasks that individuals can accomplish with guidance from more knowledgeable individuals. Through interaction with peers, teachers, and other members of society, individuals gradually develop new skills and understanding. In the context of language learning, social interaction provides opportunities for individuals to practice communication, receive feedback, and improve their linguistic competence. As individuals interact with speakers of different languages, they gradually develop the ability to understand and use those languages effectively.

Social Development Theory also highlights the role of language in shaping social interaction and cognitive development. Vygotsky emphasized that language is not only a tool for communication but also a cognitive instrument that shapes how individuals think and understand the world. Through social interaction, individuals learn how to use language to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and collaborate with others. Consequently, multilingual competence can significantly enhance individuals' ability to engage in complex social interactions and participate in diverse communities.

In the context of this study, Social Development Theory explains how multilingual competence develops through social interaction and how it contributes to interpersonal communication and professional development. Individuals who frequently interact with people from different linguistic backgrounds are more likely to develop multilingual abilities and stronger social skills. These competencies enable them to communicate effectively in multicultural environments and increase their opportunities for career advancement in global labour markets.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research approach to examine the relationships among multilingual proficiency, social skills, and job prospects among university students. Quantitative research is commonly used in social science studies to identify patterns, relationships, and differences among variables through statistical analysis. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research enables researchers to collect

numerical data that can be analyzed systematically in order to test hypotheses and examine relationships between variables. In this study, a survey method was selected because it enables researchers to efficiently collect responses from a relatively large group of participants. The survey approach is appropriate for investigating perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to multilingual competence and its influence on social interaction and employability. By applying statistical analysis techniques, the study aims to identify whether multilingual proficiency is associated with demographic characteristics and to examine its relationship with social skills and job prospects among university students.

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to collect data from respondents at a single point in time. The survey design was chosen because it enables researchers to gather information on participants' perceptions and experiences of multilingual competence, social skills, and employability. A structured questionnaire was used as the primary research instrument to ensure consistency in data collection. The questionnaire included several items designed to measure respondents' language abilities, interpersonal communication skills, and perceptions regarding career opportunities associated with multilingual competence. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). This scale is commonly used in social science research because it allows participants to express varying degrees of agreement or disagreement with survey statements. The collected data were then analyzed using statistical techniques to examine relationships between the study variables.

Population and Sampling

The population for this study consisted of students enrolled in the Bachelor of Counselling (Honours) program at Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah (USAS). According to the available institutional data, the total population included 337 students. To determine the appropriate sample size for the study, the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling table was used. Based on this table, a minimum sample size of 132 respondents was required to adequately represent the population. However, the study collected responses from 170 students, exceeding the recommended minimum sample size and thereby increasing the reliability of the results. The sampling method used in this research was simple random sampling, which ensures that every member of the population has an equal probability of being selected as a participant. This method helps minimize sampling bias and improve the representativeness of the sample relative to the overall population.

Instrument Development

The primary data collection instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire developed based on relevant literature related to multilingual competence, social skills, and employability. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. Section A collected demographic information such as age, gender, nationality, and race. Section B focused on multilingual proficiency and included items measuring respondents' language abilities and experiences with multiple languages. Section C examined social skills by asking respondents to evaluate their communication abilities and interpersonal interaction. Section D measured respondents' perceptions regarding job prospects and the influence of multilingual competence on employment opportunities. All measurement items were designed using a five-point Likert scale to capture respondents' attitudes and perceptions. The structured format of the questionnaire enabled consistent responses and facilitated statistical analysis during data processing.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process began with identifying the target population and obtaining permission to distribute the questionnaire to the selected respondents. The questionnaire was developed using Google Forms, which allowed respondents to complete the survey electronically. The survey link was distributed via a university communication platform, specifically the official WhatsApp group for students in the Bachelor of Counselling (Honours) program. The online distribution method was chosen because it allowed respondents to access the questionnaire conveniently and submit their responses efficiently. Before participating in the survey, respondents were informed of the study's purpose and assured that their responses would remain confidential and be used solely for research purposes. The online survey approach helped increase participation and ensured that data collection could be completed within a relatively short period.

Pilot Study and Reliability Testing

Prior to the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted to assess the reliability and clarity of the questionnaire. The pilot study involved 60 respondents, all of whom were students from Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA Kuala Lumpur (KUPTM) and Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah (USAS). These participants were selected because they possessed characteristics similar to the actual study respondents. The purpose of the pilot study was to ensure that the questionnaire items were clearly understood and relevant to the research objectives. Reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach's Alpha to measure the internal consistency of the measurement items. The results indicated acceptable reliability values for all variables: multilingualism ($\alpha = .71$), social skills ($\alpha = .77$), and job prospects ($\alpha = .85$). These values exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 recommended in social science research, indicating that the questionnaire was reliable and suitable for the main study.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0. Descriptive statistics were first used to summarize the respondents' demographic characteristics. Subsequently, inferential statistical techniques were applied to examine the research hypotheses. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether multilingual proficiency differed by gender. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was used to examine differences in multilingual competence across age groups. In addition, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among multilingual proficiency, social skills, and job prospects. These statistical methods were selected because they are widely used in quantitative research to analyze relationships between variables and test research hypotheses. The results of these analyses provided empirical evidence regarding the influence of multilingual competence on social interaction and employability.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Based on the literature reviewed, several hypotheses were developed to examine the relationship between multilingual proficiency, social skills, and job prospects. Previous studies have emphasized that multilingual competence is influenced by various demographic and social factors. In addition, multilingual ability has been linked to improved interpersonal communication and enhanced career opportunities in global labour markets. Understanding these relationships is important for determining how multilingual competence contributes to social interaction and employability among university students. Therefore, this

study proposes four hypotheses that correspond to the research objectives and examine the influence of demographic factors and interpersonal competencies on multilingual proficiency.

H1: Gender Differences in Multilingualism

Previous research has examined whether demographic characteristics influence language acquisition and multilingual competence. Some studies suggest that gender differences may affect learning preferences, communication styles, and language acquisition patterns. For instance, female students are often reported to demonstrate stronger communication skills and greater motivation for language learning in educational settings. However, other studies indicate that multilingual competence may develop similarly in males and females when both groups are exposed to similar learning opportunities. In the context of higher education, students are often provided with equal access to language learning resources and multicultural interaction, which may reduce gender-based differences in multilingual proficiency. Therefore, examining whether gender influences multilingual competence among university students is necessary to determine whether demographic characteristics influence language development.

H1: There is a significant difference in multilingual proficiency between male and female students.

H2: Age Differences in Multilingualism

Age is often considered an important factor in language acquisition and multilingual development. Earlier studies have suggested that younger individuals may acquire new languages more easily due to greater cognitive flexibility and learning adaptability. However, other researchers argue that language acquisition is influenced more strongly by exposure, motivation, and educational opportunities rather than age alone. In university settings, students often share similar educational experiences and learning environments regardless of age. Consequently, differences in multilingual proficiency among university students may not necessarily be influenced by age. Investigating the relationship between age and multilingual competence can provide insights into whether language learning opportunities are equally accessible across different age groups.

H2: There is a significant difference in multilingual proficiency across different age groups.

H3: Social Skills and Multilingualism

Social interaction plays a crucial role in language development because it provides opportunities to practice and improve language skills. Individuals who frequently engage in interpersonal communication are more likely to encounter diverse linguistic environments that encourage language learning. Previous studies have suggested that multilingual individuals often possess stronger interpersonal competencies because their language experiences expose them to different communication styles and cultural perspectives. Furthermore, social skills such as communication confidence, empathy, and interpersonal adaptability may motivate individuals to learn and use multiple languages when interacting with others. As a result, individuals who demonstrate stronger social interaction abilities may also demonstrate higher levels of multilingual competence.

H3: Social skills are positively related to multilingual proficiency.

H4: Job Prospects and Multilingualism

In global labour markets, language proficiency is increasingly regarded as an important factor that enhances employability. Employers frequently seek individuals who can communicate effectively with international clients, partners, and colleagues. Multilingual employees are often able to facilitate cross-cultural communication and contribute to international business operations. Previous studies have indicated that individuals who possess multilingual competence tend to have better employment opportunities and greater career mobility. Consequently, individuals who perceive strong career benefits from language proficiency may be more motivated to develop multilingual skills. Examining the relationship between multilingual competence and job prospects is therefore important in understanding how language skills influence employability.

H4: Job prospects are positively related to multilingual proficiency.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 170 students participated in this study. The demographic profile of the respondents provides an overview of the sample. The results show that 63 respondents (37.1%) were male and 107 (62.9%) were female. In terms of ethnicity, the majority of respondents were Malay, accounting for 148 participants (87.1%), followed by Chinese with 17 (10%) and Indian with 5 (2.9%). The age distribution indicates that most respondents were between 20 and 22 years old, representing 103 students (60.8%). This was followed by respondents aged 23 to 25 years, comprising 61 students (35.9%), while only a small proportion of respondents were between 26 and 28 years old, representing 6 students (3.5%). These demographic findings indicate that the respondents were largely undergraduate students who are currently developing their academic competencies and preparing for future career opportunities.

Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. Cronbach's Alpha values were calculated for each variable to determine whether the items reliably measured the intended constructs. The results show that the reliability coefficients for multilingualism were $\alpha = 0.851$, for social skills $\alpha = 0.812$, and for job prospects $\alpha = 0.915$. According to Hair et al. (2014), Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 indicate acceptable reliability in social science research. Therefore, the results demonstrate that the measurement items used in this study possess strong internal consistency. These findings indicate that the questionnaire items effectively measured respondents' perceptions regarding multilingual competence, interpersonal communication abilities, and employment opportunities.

Gender Differences in Multilingualism

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in multilingual proficiency between male and female respondents. The results showed no significant difference between gender and multilingualism ($t = 0.461$, $p > 0.05$). The mean score for male respondents was 4.0397 (SD = 0.58518), and for female respondents, 4.0486 (SD = 0.52564). The similarity between these mean values indicates that both male and female students demonstrated comparable levels of multilingual competence. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 (H1), which proposed that gender differences

significantly influence multilingual proficiency, is not supported. This finding suggests that multilingual competence among university students may not be determined by gender but rather by exposure to language learning environments and opportunities for communication. In modern educational settings, both male and female students generally receive equal access to language education and multicultural interaction, which may explain the absence of gender differences in multilingual ability.

Age Differences in Multilingualism

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine whether multilingual proficiency differed significantly among respondents from different age groups. The results indicated no significant difference between age and multilingualism ($F = 0.465$, $p > 0.05$). This finding indicates that multilingual competence does not vary significantly across different age categories within the sample. Consequently, Hypothesis 2 (H2), which suggested that multilingual proficiency differs according to age groups, is not supported. The results imply that multilingual competence among university students may depend more on language exposure, learning experiences, and communication practices rather than age differences. Students who interact frequently in multilingual environments are likely to develop language abilities regardless of their age group. Therefore, language learning opportunities and communication environments appear to be more influential factors in developing multilingual competence than demographic characteristics.

Relationship Between Social Skills and Multilingualism

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between social skills and multilingual proficiency. The results revealed a moderate positive relationship between social skills and multilingualism ($r = 0.534$, $p < 0.01$). This finding indicates that students with stronger interpersonal communication skills tend to demonstrate higher levels of multilingual competence. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 (H3), which proposed a positive relationship between social skills and multilingual proficiency, is supported. The result suggests that individuals who frequently engage in social interaction may have more opportunities to practice and develop language abilities. Communication with peers from different linguistic backgrounds encourages individuals to use multiple languages and adapt their communication styles. This finding aligns with previous studies, which emphasize that social interaction plays an important role in language learning and the development of communication (Bialystok et al., 2012).

Relationship Between Job Prospects and Multilingualism

Pearson correlation analysis was also conducted to examine the relationship between multilingual proficiency and job prospects. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between job prospects and multilingualism ($r = 0.565$, $p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that respondents perceive multilingual competence as an important factor that enhances employment opportunities. Consequently, Hypothesis 4 (H4), which proposed a positive relationship between multilingual proficiency and job prospects, is supported. Students who possess multilingual abilities may feel more confident about competing in the labour market because language skills enable them to communicate with international clients, colleagues, and organizations. In globalized industries, multilingual employees are often highly valued because they can facilitate cross-cultural communication and support international collaboration.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that multilingual competence plays an important role in enhancing both interpersonal communication and employment opportunities among university students. Although demographic factors such as gender and age were not found to significantly influence multilingual proficiency, the results indicate that social skills and job prospects are strongly associated with multilingual competence. The positive relationship between social skills and multilingual proficiency suggests that individuals who actively engage in interpersonal communication are more likely to develop language abilities. This finding supports the principles of Social Development Theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in language learning and cognitive development.

In addition, the significant relationship between multilingual competence and job prospects indicates that language proficiency enhances employability. In global labour markets, organizations increasingly require employees who can communicate effectively across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Multilingual individuals, therefore, possess advantages in international business, tourism, education, and other global industries. These findings also support Affordance Theory, which suggests that individuals develop skills in response to opportunities available within their environment. Exposure to multilingual environments encourages individuals to acquire language skills that can enhance their professional opportunities.

CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by examining the relationship between multilingual competence, social skills, and job prospects among university students. Previous research has widely discussed multilingualism as a linguistic ability; however, limited studies have examined how multilingual competence interacts with interpersonal communication and employability simultaneously. By integrating these three constructs, this study provides a broader understanding of how language proficiency influences both social and professional outcomes. The findings demonstrate that multilingual competence is positively associated with social skills and perceived employment opportunities, suggesting that language abilities may contribute to the development of interpersonal communication and career readiness.

In addition, the findings support the theoretical perspectives of Affordance Theory and Social Development Theory. Affordance Theory explains how individuals develop new skills in response to opportunities within their environment, while Social Development Theory highlights the role of social interaction in learning and cognitive development. The results indicate that multilingual competence develops through social interaction and communication practices, which subsequently enhance individuals' ability to interact effectively and pursue professional opportunities. Therefore, this study extends the application of these theories by demonstrating their relevance in explaining the role of multilingual competence in social and employment contexts.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study provide several practical implications for educational institutions, policymakers, and students. First, universities should strengthen language education programs to encourage students to develop multilingual competencies that can support their interpersonal communication and professional development. Exposure to multiple languages through formal education, cultural exchange programs, and international collaborations can help students develop stronger communication abilities and cultural

awareness. These competencies are increasingly important in global labour markets where employers value employees who can communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Second, educational institutions should integrate communication skill development into academic programs to enhance students' social interaction abilities. Training in interpersonal communication, teamwork, and cross-cultural interaction can help students build the social skills necessary for effective collaboration in multicultural environments. Developing these competencies may also increase students' confidence in interacting with diverse communities and professional networks.

Finally, students themselves should recognize the importance of multilingual competence as a valuable professional skill. Learning multiple languages can expand career opportunities by enabling individuals to communicate with international organizations, clients, and colleagues. Therefore, students who invest in developing language proficiency may gain a competitive advantage in the global labour market.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between multilingual competence, social skills, and job prospects among university students. The findings indicate that demographic factors such as gender and age do not significantly influence multilingual proficiency among the respondents. However, the study revealed significant positive relationships between multilingual competence and both social skills and job prospects. These results suggest that individuals with stronger interpersonal communication skills are more likely to develop multilingual competence, and that multilingual proficiency may enhance individuals' confidence in employment opportunities.

The findings highlight the importance of multilingual competence in supporting social interaction and employability in an increasingly globalized world. As communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries becomes more common, individuals who possess multilingual abilities are better positioned to participate effectively in multicultural environments and global labour markets. Therefore, developing multilingual competence should be considered an important educational objective for students who wish to enhance their professional opportunities.

Future research may expand on this study by including respondents from different academic programs, universities, or countries to obtain a broader understanding of multilingual competence and its impact on employability. In addition, qualitative approaches may provide deeper insights into how individuals experience multilingual communication in social and professional contexts. Such research may further contribute to understanding the role of language proficiency in shaping social interaction and career development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the University of Jambi for providing the resources and support necessary to complete this study. We would also like to thank all participants who contributed their time and insights to this research. Special appreciation is extended to colleagues and peers who offered valuable feedback during the development of this manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in the paper.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Author 1 contributed to the conceptualization, research design, and writing of the original draft.

Author 2 was responsible for data collection, analysis, and validation of the results.

Author 3 provided supervision, critical review, and editing of the final manuscript.

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the University of Jambi and the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was obtained from the **Review Board** under reference number JE212. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided written informed consent prior to participation. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and the data collected were used solely for academic purposes.

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