

MODULE CODE: ECGE7002Q

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DISSERTATION

To what extent do the stakeholders of YCIS Beijing know about the advantages of being bilingual and multilingual?

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Student Number: 0600014

Word Count: 17,728

Submission Date: 29/9/2022



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DECLARATION

I certify that the whole of this work is the result of my individual effort, and that all sources have been acknowledged.

Signed *MD Cole* **(Student)**

Date *27/9/2022*

DECLARATION

I am satisfied that this work is the result of the Student's effort.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr Hywel Lewis, who has guided me through my degree and final dissertation. He has provided me with necessary resources and support.

I am grateful to the staff members and parents of YCIS Beijing, who have been instrumental and extremely helpful in completing this study.

I am extremely thankful to Song Yanshan, for the unlimited assistance and linguistic expertise while helping to translate the questionnaire.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank my family and friends, who have offered assistance through a challenging period of time and been gracious with their endless encouragement.

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Abstract

It has been stated that over half of the world's population speak two or more languages. The aim of this study was to discover how much the educators, parents/guardians and members of the marketing department within an international bilingual school, knew about bilingualism and multilingualism. The focus school for this study is situated in Beijing, China. In particular, the researcher hoped to find what the stakeholders of this school knew about recent research into the field of bilingualism and the potential cognitive benefits that bilinguals may enjoy.

A mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to gather data from stakeholders. The main findings of the study showed that stakeholders were able to discuss the potential social, educational or occupational benefits that speaking two or more languages could bring. However, research into cognitive advantages such as delaying signs of dementia were not widely known by participants in the study.

Introduction

The ability to communicate is a phenomenon that has propelled the development of humans and shaped the world that we live in today. The history of bilingualism and multilingualism is deep and rich and has often been the topic of debate. The individuals and groups of people who can communicate in two or more languages have often intrigued researchers and the general public. How does having skills or a linguistic ability in two or more languages impact a person and how does that compare to a monolingual? In the past, monolinguals held the concern that polyglots could suffer from problems with cognitive development or identity issues, stemming from the confusion of different languages and cultures.

Additionally, possessing and applying linguistic skills to communicate bilingually has at times fostered fear or suspicion amongst monolingual societies. The assorted opinions and studies into bilingualism will be explored within this paper.

Human migration patterns and developments in transport, technology and communication have caused a vast change in the world in terms of society, politics, economics and linking many of these areas, language and

communication. A greater connected global population has resulted in the spread of languages and cultures. While statistics show that many native English speakers are monolingual, individuals who speak just one language are actually in the minority. Baker & Wright explain, 'Bilinguals are present in every country of the world, in every social class and in all age groups. Numerically, bilinguals and multilinguals are in the majority in the world' (2017:60). It is now estimated that more than half of the world's population are bilingual (Ansaldi et al., 2008; Wong et al., 2016)

The use of language by an individual or community can be impacted by several different aspects. These influences include cultural, socioeconomic and political factors and can shift depending on a person's life and how they need or are required to use a language. The immense list of terminology associated with both bilingualism and multilingualism demonstrates the varied details and nuances of this complex phenomenon.

The difficulties that arise in defining and testing bilingualism is a debatable topic. The skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening are to be considered, and the fluency of these skills can vary between different people and the domains or situations in which they find themselves. One

widely accepted method of ascertaining a person's language proficiency is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It can measure the various linguistic skills and rank them from beginner level to proficient.

Due to the minutiae related to linguistics, it can be extremely challenging to categorise or label a person as being completely balanced bilingually or multilingually. Research explains that it is rare for a person's language ability to be completely equal among the languages that he or she uses. An individual is more likely to develop and use a language depending on the necessity or dominant language being used in the environment or domain in which they are communicating. Baetens Beardsmore (1991) references the 'various disciplines involved in analysing the phenomenon [of bilingualism]'.

As the field of bilingualism and multilingualism are both intricately diverse, similarly, attitudes towards speaking two or more languages are also multifaceted.

The purpose of this research paper is to get a deeper comprehension of what a bilingual school community actually understands about bilingualism and multilingualism. It will aim to discover what the stakeholders know about being bilingual or multilingual, and specifically investigate their awareness of recent research, particularly regarding the cognitive advantages of using two or more languages. The research will take place within an international bilingual school. It will involve three groups of stakeholders who are invested in the school; teachers, the admissions/marketing department and the parents/guardians of students who attend the school.

Yew Chung International School of Beijing (YCIS Beijing) is part of an education foundation that promotes bilingual education. In total there are six YCIS schools located in mainland China, Hong Kong and the United States of America. The Early Childhood Education (ECE) centre and the primary school adopt a bilingual teaching method. The YCIS Beijing ECE and primary school consist of homerooms in which two qualified teachers deliver lessons. Mandarin Chinese and English being the languages of instruction. One teacher is a native Chinese speaker, and the other, a native English speaker. Together, they plan and deliver a range of lessons

that follow standards based upon an internationalised adaptation of the National Curriculum for England and Wales.

YCIS Beijing was first established in 1995 and now has a study body of over 750 pupils, around 70% of the current student cohort being Mandarin Chinese first-language speakers, and the next largest linguistic group is English first-language, followed by Korean. The remaining number of nationalities and languages reflects the diverse nature of an international school, and the school office records currently show that students are from approximately 42 different countries in total.

At YCIS Beijing, the co-teaching model is currently being discussed and adapted to encourage more educational opportunities and teaching practices that best support language development in both English and Mandarin Chinese. Whilst following the co-teaching model in which both languages are used simultaneously within each lesson, teachers observed that students would generally focus on their native language and not fully engage with their second language. With careful monitoring, the school has found that some students have not fully developed their second language. The school has, therefore, been using research on bilingual teaching

methodology and consulted the researcher of this paper to continually adapt and hold meaningful conversations on this topic.

The school has provided staff with the opportunity to participate in a Bilingual and Multilingual Learners (BML) professional development study group, its purpose being to equip teachers with more strategies and tools to best support various language learners in the bilingual environment. The BML course is provided by the Centre for Educators of Bilingual and Multilingual Learners, which is a UK-based enterprise aiming to support the language development of bilingual and multilingual students. The school aims to continue offering this course to staff members, particularly to ensure that when they join the school, they will all have a solid foundation in understanding bilingualism and multilingualism and are prepared with some strategies which can help support language development.

Additionally, the school has also offered training based on the Teaching in English in Multilingual Classrooms (TEMC) which was formerly known as Teaching ESL Students in Mainstream Classrooms. Providing these courses to staff shows that there is a focus on how to help language learners access lesson content when learning through a second language.

This highlights the school's mission to foster bilingualism and multilingualism. However, while the school promotes itself on providing students with an education in both English and Mandarin Chinese, the researcher was keen to uncover what the different stakeholders of this school community believe to be the benefits of such an education. While it appears that the school has a clear drive to develop children's bilingual and multilingual skills, the researcher of this paper hoped to uncover the opinions of staff and families on this topic and also determine to what extent do the participants of this study know about research into the advantages of bilingualism and multilingualism.

As mentioned, the Beijing campus is the focus of this study. At the time of the research being undertaken, the researcher was employed by YCIS Beijing as a primary school teacher and had worked there for nine years.

During this time, the researcher has gained more knowledge about the various aspects of bilingualism and multilingualism and it was through studying the benefits of using two or more languages, that he developed a greater comprehension of recent research in this field. However, the researcher suspected that findings from recent studies on this topic were

not widely recognised or known, neither by staff members nor the families of the students attending the school. Since the school is a bilingual international school, this educational establishment is aimed at fostering and developing bilingual and multilingual students. The research that has been completed in this area is, therefore, highly relevant in this context. Thus, the researcher decided to undertake a study to find out what, and how much the stakeholders of YCIS Beijing know about the phenomenon of being bilingual or multilingual. The hypothesis being, that while there would be some understanding of potential social, educational, occupational advantages for bilingual individuals, the majority of the stakeholders would not be aware of recent research into this field, particularly with regard to recent studies into possible cognitive benefits for bilinguals or polyglots.

During the preliminary stages, the researcher hoped to gain a general idea of what the school community understands about this aspect of linguistics. As the study continued, the researcher then wanted to focus more on finding out what the staff members and parents or guardians of the students know about the specific benefits an individual may enjoy if they are bilingual. In particular, the researcher hoped to uncover how aware the community is about the cognitive advantages of bilingualism and

multilingualism. Are people in the school community influenced by outdated opinions and theories on bilingualism? Historical attitudes such as those present during the 'period of detrimental effects' (Baker, 2017) will be explored later in this paper. The researcher was keen to investigate if stakeholders are affected by ideas shared during this period or if the staff and parents are familiar with the current research into the potential gains that bilingual individuals can enjoy.

The researcher aimed to use the results of the study to answer the question: *to what extent do the stakeholders of YCIS Beijing know about the advantages of being bilingual and multilingual?*

The researcher predicted that there will be some knowledge about the advantages of bilingualism and multilingualism, however, he hypothesised that the school community will be less acquainted with research on the cognitive benefits that being bilingual or multilingual can bring.

This paper will explore existing research relating to and influencing this study. It will later explain the chosen methodology, present and evaluate

the results of the research and finally draw conclusions and reflect on how to use the data and findings to inform follow-up actions.

In Chapter 2 of this paper, the work of academics will be briefly discussed to provide an overview of different theories and research in the field of bilingualism, which have supported the researcher in planning and conducting this study.

Literature review

The occurrence of bilingualism and how it is viewed has undergone a shift in opinion over the years. This is due to changes in society, politics and studies conducted in this field. Recent research provides evidence of many advantages that may be afforded to a bilingual individual. However, this has not always been widely acknowledged. Bilingualism has indeed been a topic on which many have debated and undertaken research. Ruiz (1984) puts forth a model which classifies these viewpoints on bilingualism and multilingualism into three categories: language as a problem, language as a right and language as a resource.

Language as a problem

Up until the 1960s, many believed that bilingual people would suffer from problems with their cognitive function and development. Additionally, many English-speaking nations held a common opinion that the existence of bilingualism within a community can bring about segregation and societal issues. This fear of having a variety of languages being used throughout a community has led to many English-speaking countries fervently promoting a monolingual society. Encouraging the use of one language was based on

the idea that this could help to generate social cohesion and a united population.

Rumbaut (2009: 64) comments on the United States of America being a “graveyard for languages because of its historical ability to absorb immigrants by the millions and extinguish their mother tongues within a few generations.” This highlights the agenda adopted by many English-speaking countries, which was to create a society that offered greater opportunities to individuals who spoke English, to foster a monolingual society and encourage bilinguals to assimilate to the majority language and culture.

Baker (2011: 377) notes that minority languages within a society are often perceived negatively, as they can be considered as the root of societal, economic and educational problems.

Monolinguals views on bilingualism are often synonymous with the category of 'language as a problem'. Valdés (2015:39) clarifies:

Embedded with the discourse of monolingualism are strong beliefs about (a) the dangers of early bilingualism, (b) the negative effects of 'unbalanced' bilingualism on individuals, and (c) the expectation that the 'true' or 'real' bilingualism will be identical to native speakers in both languages.

Language as a right

Another perspective on language is viewing it as a basic human right.

Baker & Wright (2017:374) put forth the following argument by Skutnabb-Kangas (2011):

Just as there are often individual rights in choice of religion, so, it is argued, there should be an individual right to choice of language, and to bilingual education.

While it has been noted that there are socioeconomic and political reasons for languages being used or not (Baker & Wright, 2017), it is also important to acknowledge that there are some languages that have been forbidden or actively restricted. One can consider that the ability to communicate in one's language is key to a person's identity, wellbeing and civil liberty. If an

individual's language is forbidden or they are persecuted for using a language, then we can understand that it could have a big impact on him or her.

Language as a resource

In addition to the conflicting viewpoints of language as a problem and language as a right, there is also the stance of considering language as 'a personal, community and regional resource. Bilingualism can provide an intellectual, cultural, economic, social, communication and citizenship resource' (Baker & Wright, 2017).

It has been observed that within mainland Europe, there has been a growth and encouragement of multilingualism. Dendrinos (2018) observes, 'More primary school students are learning foreign languages from a younger age, and more lower secondary school students are learning two foreign languages compared to 10 years ago'.

Languages can be recognised for opportunities in establishing economic links between groups and fostering positive foreign trade relationships.

Languages can also nurture stronger social ties across diverse groups and

populations and help to support cross-cultural and intercultural understanding (Baker & Wright, 2017).

Cognitive aspects of bilingualism

Baker & Wright (2017:133) examine the changes in opinion and theories surrounding bilingualism and its impact on cognitive development and functions. There are three periods of time that are discussed which are highly influenced by studies on the intelligence of bilinguals. The differing periods that are outlined are not necessarily confined to individual time intervals but, instead, chronologically overlap and are intrinsically linked to the studies that were undertaken.

The period of detrimental effects

One outdated concept, yet possibly still a theory that some may believe, is called the Separate Underlying Proficiency Model of Bilingualism (SUP). Also referred to as the 'Balance' or 'Balloon Theory', Cummins (1980) offers us a description that can help to understand the idea more clearly. The Balloon Theory implies that a brain's capacity to learn and contain languages is finite. An image of two separate balloons is used to illustrate this concept, suggesting that the two languages are independent of each

other, do not share links and also take up 'space', so that if one language's 'balloon' grows or 'inflates', it will be to the detriment of the other language.

As far back as the early nineteenth century to around the 1960s, the widely accepted stance on bilingualism was that it would result in a negative effect on an individual's thinking. Grosjean (1982) declares that until more recent times, there were many researchers who supported Otto Jespersen's notion that bilingualism could have a negative impact on how a child learns. Research on this matter appeared to confirm this notion and prove that monolinguals performed better on mental tests. The most frequently used form of testing was that of comparing the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) scores of bilinguals and monolinguals, with a particular focus on verbal IQ. Baker & Wright (2017), along with other researchers, explain that while it may be possible for monolinguals to achieve greater success on tests than their bilingual counterparts, they also acknowledge that the research which suggested detrimental effects had several flaws or limitations which brings into question the reliability of the results.

One example of a flaw or limitation is discussed by Valdés & Feguerroa (1994) who point out that a person could be considered skilled or intelligent

in many different aspects or fields, yet a test of one's IQ generally focuses on testing 'a middle class, white, Western view of intelligence'.

Another drawback to the testing of intelligence that took place during this period is the language in which testing was conducted. During the stages of early research, many verbal IQ tests were only administered in English (Hakuta, 1986). Baker & Wright (2017) explain that while more recent standards call for testing to be conducted in the bilingual's stronger language, testing solely in English during earlier studies was a disadvantage to the bilingual participants.

There are more methodological weaknesses to the testing and comparison of intelligence in monolinguals and bilinguals. For example, to conduct a fair test into the cognitive functions of monolinguals and bilinguals, there should be no other variables in the investigation other than the linguistic ability of participants. Baker & Wright (2017:136) state that 'it is necessary to match the groups on variables such as socioeconomic and cultural class, gender, age, type of school attended and urban/rural and subtractive/additive environments.' During the period of detrimental effects, monolingual and bilingual participants came from different backgrounds and, therefore, it could be considered that the testing during this time

cannot be thought of as fair or accurate in assessing and comparing the effects of monolingualism and bilingualism on cognitive functions due to the amount of variables that could have an impact on the findings.

The period of neutral effects

While there was a period of time which suggested that speaking two or more languages could have a negative impact on an individual's learning and development, there is also a period of time in which research indicated that there were neither negative nor additive impacts to being bilingual or multilingual.

Some research conducted during this period that sought to compare the IQ levels of monolinguals and bilinguals reported that there was no difference, suggesting, therefore, that the IQ of a person was not impacted by how many languages they spoke. Early research in the United States undertaken by Pintner and Arsenian (1937) found there was no correlation or link between verbal (and non-verbal) IQ and Yiddish-English bilingualism/monolingualism. The number of studies that conveyed neutral effects is relatively limited. However, the research undertaken during this period was important since it exposed the inconsistencies and flaws in the studies that suggested detrimental effects.

The period of additive effects

In contrast to the Separate Underlying Proficiency Model associated with the research emanating from the Period of Detrimental Effects, Cummins (1980) also highlights an alternative Common Underlying Proficiency Model (CUP) or 'Iceberg Theory', thus rejecting the antiquated 'Balloon Theory' of the previous period. The image of an iceberg which has two 'peaks' yet is connected beneath the surface, is used to illustrate that languages can co-exist in the brain and derive from the same linguistic central operating system. This concept maintains that different languages can share the same cognitive processes and that ideas learned in one language can be transferred to or shared with another language.

It was the influential and formative work of Peal and Lambert (1962) which caused a big shift in understanding the correlation between bilingualism and cognition. This research rectified the mistakes which had been made during research from the period of detrimental effects. Moreover, the study found that being bilingual does not necessarily result in detrimental or neutral effects but could provide a person with cognitive advantages when compared to a monolingual. One key element of this seminal study that sets it apart from the other research of solely testing the participants' IQ,

was that it broadened the research to observe cognition in a broader sense, such as ‘thinking styles and strategies.’

However, while the research has been highly significant in the field of bilingualism and multilingualism, there are also accepted flaws to the study. One such weakness is that the sample of 110 children were 10 years old from a middle-class background in Montreal. Baker and Wright (2017:149) acknowledge, ‘this is not a sample that can be generalized to the population of bilinguals either in Canada or throughout the world.’ This once again highlights the challenging nature of researching such an intricate and complicated topic.

Linguistics and the brain

Baker & Wright (2017) consider studies into linguistics and the brain. With advancements in the techniques and technologies that can best support studies on the brain, scientists have gained more information about how a brain develops and organizes information. Studies show that for most adults who are right-handed, the left hemisphere of the brain is chiefly used for language processing (Vaid, 2002). However, using meta-analysis, researchers discovered that, while the left hemisphere is dominant in

processing language in a monolingual brain, in early fluent bilinguals it appears that bilateral involvement is evident when compared to bilinguals who acquired their skill later in life, thus suggesting that bilinguals are not as left lateralised as monolingual peers. Additionally, the age at which a bilingual first encounters a second language has an impact on the level of lateralisation (Fava et al., 2011; Peng & Wang, 2011).

The age of learning a second language and the impact that has on cognitive development and functions is a contentious topic and is widely described as the Critical Period Hypothesis (Baker & Wright, 2017:140).

Further research into the bilingual brain has attempted to look at how the two languages are stored and utilised by the brain. One example of neurolinguistics research was completed by Mechelli et al. (2004) showing that learning a second language; particularly at a younger age, increased the density of grey matter.

Research into bilingualism has uncovered other potential advantages for individuals who can speak two or more languages. Existing evidence appears to show that balanced bilinguals have stronger divergent thinking skills when compared with individuals who are less balanced bilinguals or

who are monolingual. Cummins (1975, 1977) found balanced bilinguals were 'superior' to monolingual counterparts when compared on fluency and flexibility scales of verbal divergence.

Baker & Wright (2017:150) further examine research undertaken on young bilinguals and monolinguals and their cognitive development. They explain:

...bilingual children may be more sensitive than monolingual children in a social situation that requires careful communication. This links with sociolinguistic and communicative competence and suggests a heightened social awareness among bilinguals of verbal and non-verbal message cues and clues in communication.

Despite a wide range of positive research studies however, it is difficult to conclusively state that bilingualism results in cognitive advantages over monolinguals in all aspects since so many factors can affect a person's cognitive function and development. Moreover, the research undertaken can be said to have contained some failings. Many researchers and experts in this field do agree that a bilingual can have particular cognitive and social benefits. Whorf (1956:244) states, 'those who envision a future world speaking only one tongue...hold a misguided ideal and would do the evolution of the human mind the greatest disservice'.

Cummins (1976) submits a theory of language development called the 'Threshold Theory' which focuses on the links between linguistic proficiency and cognitive development. The theory categorises bilingualism into three linguistic abilities: limited bilingualism, partial bilingualism and proficient bilingualism. To explain this theory: limited bilingualism represents a lack of age-appropriate language skills in both languages, whilst partial bilingualism signifies age-appropriate development in one of the two languages and proficient bilingualism denotes age-appropriate aptitude in both of the two languages.

Cummins' (1976) Threshold Theory maintains that an individual who falls in the category of limited bilingualism will endure negative cognitive effects within an academic setting. The linguistic skills of a person who belongs to the partial bilingualism group would have a neutral impact on his or her cognitive effects, which is to say that their language ability would have neither a positive nor a negative impact. Proficient bilingualism, however, will result in positive cognitive effects in an academic context.

Nevertheless, Bialystok (2001) argues that partial bilingualism can also have a positive effect on a person's cognitive development and function.

The work of academics in this area reminds us that bilingual skills can be differentiated and emphasises that for an individual to enjoy the advantages of bilingualism or multilingualism, he or she will need to have gained proficiency in one or more of their languages.

Bilingual Education

While one reason for establishing bilingual education is to develop the provision and inclusion of speakers of minority languages, statistics show that many schools around the world are aiming to deliver an English language education in conjunction with the native language. “English is perhaps the single most important linguistic source for the promotion of global bilingualism...English has official or special status in at least 75 countries” (Bhatia and Ritchie, 2012:671).

There have been many attempts to provide statistics that could show the number of English speakers around the world. Crystal (2012) believes that there could be a total of between 1,200 and 1,500 English speakers globally. Baker & Wright (2017) point out that:

‘numbers of speakers is less important when considering the spread of English than the prestigious domains and functions into which English has spread and often dominates. The international prestige of English and

English-speaking nations and the popularity of Anglo-American culture has given the English language associations of status, power and wealth.'

While data shows that acquiring English as a second language can be seen as desirable in many parts of the world, it could also be considered as the reason why those who speak English as a first language often remain monolingual.

Bialystok (2001) explains, 'the fact that millions of children routinely grow up with more than one language in their environment and appear to suffer no obvious trauma should allay the concerns of most parents' (Baker & Wright, 2017).

Baker & Wright (2017) note that education relating to bilingualism has existed in various formats for around five thousand years. This rich history of language learning results in a plethora of pedagogical styles and theories of teaching practices. The goals and outcomes of bilingual teaching in two or more languages and about two or more languages is therefore also a diverse topic. As the focus school for this research paper is an international bilingual school, with two majority languages being used simultaneously, research in this field is important.

Baker (2010) determines that there are four main perspectives to bilingual education. They are language planning, politics, economics and cost efficiency and, finally, pedagogy. These four strands can influence and shape the opinions and delivery of bilingual education. Baker (2011) explains:

Bilingual education is not just about education. There are socio-cultural, political and economic issues ever-present in the debate over the provision of bilingual education, particularly politics.

In mainland China, the push for bilingual educational provisions can be traced back to the 1980s, during which the government 'advocated bilingual education for the preservation and promotion of minority culture' (Lin, 1997: 195).

China is home to 56 recognised ethnic groups. The largest of these groups is the Han, who make up more than 90% of the population (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2021). The other ethnic groups can, therefore, be considered minorities. Each group has different cultures and traditions and sometimes their language is different to the official language of mainland China, which is Mandarin Chinese. Lin (1997) proclaims that

scholars and the government have offered support to bilingual education programmes to help the ethnic minorities study in their mother tongue with the idea that this can also help ethnic minority students to acquire

Mandarin:

Learning in one's first language makes it easier to understand concepts and lay a foundation in basic knowledge, which will also help their acquisition of a second language, namely Mandarin.

Bilingual instruction in China has become increasingly popular. Hu (2008:196) observes that in particular, non-language subjects have seen a rise in bilingual teaching. He describes the practice of English being used to teach a non-language subject as a 'runaway juggernaut that is rattling across the country with fierce velocity'.

There have been various studies that have researched different bilingual teaching styles and ideologies. The bilingual co-teaching model used by YCIS Beijing is a unique concept and one in which there is less research about. Having two languages being taught and used simultaneously throughout the different subjects is a bilingual program that is distinctive to the schools within the YCIS foundation. The school is currently undergoing modifications to the bilingual teaching programme to support and offer the best learning experience to the students.

One form of bilingual teaching that has interested YCIS Beijing's school management and holds similarities to the school's adopted pedagogy, is that of dual language bilingual teaching. This is a form of education in which two languages are developed and used throughout the school experience. However, it differs from YCIS' Beijing's co-teaching model in that each language is scheduled or timetabled. For example, during one lesson or one school day, one language will be used as the focus of instruction and students will be encouraged to use that one language for learning during that allotted time. In a separate class or on another day, the students will then study content using the other language in order to develop linguistic skills in both languages.

One investigation conducted by Lindholm-Leary (2001) into the success of the dual language model as a form of bilingual education, showed that it is a bilingual programme that is 'effective in promoting high levels of language proficiency, academic achievement and positive attitudes to learning in students.'

Baker & Wright (2017:218) explain that the dual language bilingual programmes, when successful, can help to develop both bilingual and biliteracy skills. In addition, it can help to promote greater cross-cultural awareness and acceptance. For this form of education to work best, Baker & Wright (2017) also explain that the duration of how much time is spent studying within this programme is key to ensuring the most positive results.

Cummins (1984) recognises the spectrum of language competency and puts forward the concept of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS is the everyday conversational language that people use, whereas CALP refers to academic or more abstract vocabulary. Baker (2011) supports the principles of BICS and CALP by highlighting that some students fail in mainstream classes, because they have not developed sufficiently to meet the requirements of the curriculum. The differentiation of linguistic ability is evident within YCIS Beijing. There are some students who are fluent in either Mandarin or English, some students who are fluent in both, and there are some students who join that school that can speak neither languages at all. Bilingual and multilingual learning has been a focus of the school's long-term plan, in determining how to help the students develop from

having basic conversational skills to securing a command of the academic linguistic proficiency needed to actively engage in the content of their lessons.

Researchers agree that the languages acquired by a bilingual can at times impact each other. Language interference is a topic that can cause concerns for the parents of bilinguals as the term 'interference' suggests a negative connotation. The idea that developing bilingual skills could cause linguistic problems for individuals links back to the period of detrimental effects but can still be a continuing concern for some present day. Baker & Wright (2017) discuss terminology for various forms of language interference. Examples include phonological, lexical, syntactical and prosodic interference. Lexical interference refers to issues related to interference when selecting appropriate vocabulary; in particular, nouns and adjectives. Haugen (1956) holds the opinion that 'nouns are the most likely forms of interference in another language.'

The researcher was keen to uncover if any of the stakeholders are aware of the studies in this field or hold concerns about the issue of linguistic interference.

While the various terminology put forth by experts offers labels for interference that can occur in bilinguals, some believe that the 'mixing' of languages is not necessarily a problem or weakness. Code-mixing is used to describe a speaker who moves from one language to another within a sentence, whereas code-switching is the term given to a speaker using two languages while talking, yet each language is separated and contained within a sentence.

Meisel (2004) argues that code-switching showcases a 'higher level of linguistic proficiency.' Translanguaging is an expression used to describe how bilingual or multilingual people use languages:

The languages we use integrate, change and adapt to new learning and new situations, with effects on identity and experiences...Our use of two or more languages changes across people, time, place and need (Baker & Wright, 2017).

There can be many reasons for a person to engage in code-switching.

Having the ability to cognitively switch and mix languages depending on the context and domain in which the communication is taking place, displays an advantage that bilinguals may hold over monolinguals. Baker & Wright

(2017) summarise the study undertaken by Peal and Lambert (1962) and explain that bilingualism can foster:

greater mental flexibility; the ability to think more abstractly, and more independently of words, providing superiority in concept formation; that a more enriched bilingual and bicultural environment benefits the development of IQ; and that there is a positive transfer between a bilingual's two languages, facilitating the development of verbal IQ.

Lauchlan, Parisi & Fadda (2012) conducted a study that suggests that bilingual students at primary school outperformed monolingual peers at utilising problem-solving skills and creative thinking. Having strong problem-solving skills is an attribute that can be applied to many areas of life and across different domains. This therefore can be considered as a cognitive advantage that bilinguals have over monolinguals.

Prior and MacWhinney (2009) researched the 'bilingual advantage in task switching'. They concluded that when shifting between different tasks, bilinguals 'incurred reduced switching costs in the task-switching paradigm when compared with monolinguals, suggesting that lifelong experience in switching between languages may contribute to increased efficiency in the ability to shift flexibly between mental sets.' This research confirms the

theory that bilinguals may hold cognitive benefits when compared to monolinguals.

Research by Bialystok et al. (2004) suggests that when adults remain cognitively active into old age, it can slow down some of the effects of ageing. Studies have shown that bilinguals and multilinguals suffer less from memory loss than their monolingual counterparts. When researching adults aged sixty and over, the results showed that older bilinguals were able to preserve memory better than individuals who spoke one language. The work of Bialystok, Craik & Freedman (2007) also shows that being bilingual or multilingual can provide cognitive benefits for older people through delaying signs of dementia. More recent research supports this by asserting that symptoms of Alzheimer disease in older bilingual adults are reported up to four years later than monolinguals (Bialystok, Craik & Luk, 2012; Bialystok, Poarch, Luo & Craik, 2014; Craik, Bialystok & Freedman, 2010).

Whereas both bilingual and monolingual individuals could develop aphasia following a stroke, however, more recent studies have investigated the link between bilingualism and poststroke language recovery. Results indicated

that ‘although bilingual speakers are at equal risk of developing aphasia after stroke as monolingual ones, their aphasia is likely to be less severe (Paplikar et al., 2018).

Prolonging the quality of life for an individual is a huge benefit that could be gained from speaking two or more languages. Additionally, if one is to consider this research on a larger scale, delaying these signs of cognitive decline could have huge societal and financial advantages world wide; particularly for countries which face a larger elderly population and need to maintain a robust healthcare system to support older citizens.

Due to the focus of this paper looking into parental motivations of choosing YCIS Beijing for their children, other studies into the incentives behind choosing a linguistically-focused education have interested the researcher.

One particular study conducted in Wales looked at the motivations of parents choosing Welsh-medium education for their children. The hypothesis of the study undertaken by Hodges (2012) was that parents selected ‘a Welsh-medium education option for their children mainly for economic reasons.’ However, the results of the study showed that their

main motivation for choosing a Welsh-medium education was cultural incentives. This is indicative of the complicated and diverse reasons for families seeking an education that can develop bilingual or multilingual skills.

The studies that have shaped current research and understanding of the topic of linguistics and cognitive functions have showcased the intricate nature and many nuances associated with this field. There are many challenges that a researcher could encounter, which may impact the reliability of the results. For example, if we can ensure that monolingual and bilingual participants are from the same socioeconomic backgrounds, there could be other factors that are present which may have an impact on cognitive development and function. For instance, some respondents have an interest in music. Studies into children who study and listen to music have shown that musical training may enhance cognitive function and also can result in neuroplastic changes in the brain's structure and function (Miendlarzewska & Trost, 2014). This further demonstrates that it is very complicated to perform an accurate and reliable study into the impact of bilingualism on cognitive development since it would be extremely difficult

to guarantee that language skills were the only isolated variable in the investigation.

With multifarious elements that can either support or hinder a person's cognitive development and function, one must acknowledge that pinpointing bilingual skills as a reason for a person's cognitive advantage or weakness is a convoluted matter that academics have to reflect on when performing studies and analysing data.

Considering studies such as those conducted by Hodges (2012) has provided the researcher with questions to consider. Investigating parental motivations behind choosing YCIS Beijing for their children will help the researcher in understanding what this group of stakeholders know and feel about bilingualism and multilingualism. Does the bilingual teaching programme count as a major factor in selecting this school, or are there other reasons for choosing YCIS Beijing? If a bilingual education is the main reason for choosing the school, what is the purpose or goal of becoming bilingual? Finding out the incentives behind parents opting for YCIS Beijing could shed light on what understand about the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism.

This literature review has attempted to explore and consider different examples of research that exists under the umbrella of bilingualism and multilingualism. It has shown that studies have shaped public perception and that views on speaking two or more languages are diverse and have shifted over time. Baker & Wright (2017) highlight the weaknesses of various studies that have taken place, and this reminds us of the many factors to consider when conducting research. Many of the studies which concluded that bilingualism may cause cognitive development problems were not executed fairly due to external variables, such as socioeconomic backgrounds not being consistent between the monolingual and bilingual participants. Additionally, reflections on previous studies have highlighted the importance of considering other ways to test a person's cognitive functions and development, instead of solely looking at a person's academic or IQ test scores. Ensuring that testing is made available in the language in which a person feels most comfortable, is also an important factor.

Overall, recent research does show patterns that suggest bilinguals who have proficiency in both languages can enjoy benefits, including cognitive advantages, which monolinguals may not have. The information gathered

in this literature review has been instrumental in informing the concept, methodology and implementation of the research. While there is research on the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism, it has been difficult for the researcher to locate existing studies on what the public know about the advantages that an individual can enjoy if he or she has a good command of two or more languages. The researcher hoped to discover which areas of research about the benefits of bilingualism are common knowledge within the school community and if some people are influenced by outdated views.

Methodology

Bell & Waters (2018) provide a definition of research: ‘a detailed study of the subject, especially in order to discover (new) information or reach a (new) understanding.’ The researcher of this paper hoped to be successful in achieving this aim by collecting data for analysis in order to get a better comprehension of what staff members and families of students at YCIS Beijing know about the alleged advantages of being bilingual.

Dawson (2019) draws attention to the significance of selecting an area of study which is of particular relevance or enjoyment to the researcher, by explaining ‘it is important to stay interested in what you’re doing if you are to complete your project successfully.’ If one can find a topic that is both useful and ignites a passion for research, then it can be easier to maintain or regain motivation during the long process of research. As mentioned, the researcher is a member of staff at YCIS Beijing, which is a bilingual international school. Therefore, the topic of this study into finding out about the knowledge and understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism within the school community, is pertinent to the researcher’s job, which can help

to inform and support the current pedagogy that takes place within the school and is of great personal interest to the researcher.

Dawson (2019) also emphasises the importance of ruminating on the ‘five ‘Ws’’ when forming a research project. It is vital that the researcher asks themselves ‘What? Why? Who? Where? When?’ to help focus on the objectives of the study and how best to achieve the best results that will answer the hypothesis.

The need to ensure validity and reliability of the data was highly important throughout the study. Arthur et al. (2012:174) state:

Reliability, which ‘refers to the trustworthiness of observations or data’, can be measured by how accurately the study reflects the participants’ meaning and their authority to comment on matters being studied.’

Experts and academics agree that when research is performed, it is essential that ethical issues are considered throughout the process of planning, performing and analysing research. Dawson (2019) supplies a definition of research ethics as making sure that researchers ‘treat both the participants and the information they provide with honesty and respect.’

Due to the respondents divulging personal information and experiences, it was vital that the researcher of this study showed respect to all involved. In

order to guarantee that the study would meet the requirements of the code of ethics, once the researcher had planned out this study, he pursued and successfully received ethical approval via the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Bell & Waters (2018) discuss three stages of research, which is 'the posing of a question, the collection of data to answer the question, and presenting an answer to the question.' During the collection of data, while trying to answer the question 'To what extent do the stakeholders of YCIS Beijing know about the advantages of being bilingual and multilingual?' there are likely to be a variety of responses. It is difficult to answer such a question with a one-word answer, as it refers to the degree of knowledge. Therefore, the researcher looked for patterns in the data and recurring themes or patterns from the information supplied during this stage of the research.

The research design consisted of two stages. The study involved the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data consequently, the research methods adopted were questionnaires and interviews respectively. The interviews were scheduled with a range of respondents who had already participated in the questionnaire and noted their willingness to participate further in an interview.

Questionnaire methodology

The questionnaire section of this research served as an initial exploratory stage with the purpose of gathering data from a wide range of participants across the school community's population.

Arthur et al. (2012) discuss a checklist created by Keith Punch (2005), which outlines standards that help to formulate suitable research questions that can result in useful data. It recommends that the researcher aims to design questions that are clear, specific, answerable, interconnected, interesting and worthwhile researching. Taking this guidance into consideration helped the researcher to focus on questions that would help uncover the opinions of participants and gain an understanding of what the stakeholders of YCIS know about the advantages of being bilingual and multilingual.

Bell & Waters (2018) clarify the purpose of using a questionnaire or survey as a means to collect data:

When it comes to subject matter, all one can say is that surveys are concerned with the demographic characteristics, the social environment, the activities, or the opinions and attitude of some group of people.

Since the fundamental goal of this study was to establish attitudes and knowledge of staff and parents of students at YCIS relating to alleged bilingual benefits, one can see that using a questionnaire as an entry point to this study can be constructive as it lays a foundation that can be used in conjunction with the later interviews. So, one can conclude that solely relying on a questionnaire as a method of collecting data has drawbacks since some questions and multiple-choice answers do not fully allow a respondent to truly express himself or herself in a way that could happen in a conversation. Hodges (2012) justifies the choice of combining qualitative and quantitative research. Triangulation or mixed method research 'is a good way of approaching research, as it enables you to counteract the weaknesses in both qualitative and quantitative research.'

The semi-structured questionnaire contained a mixture of closed and open-ended questions. Staff and parents who responded were provided with multiple choice answers as well as having an option to type in an alternative response to some questions. The responses gathered in the questionnaire phase acted as the foundation of this study, which was later built upon during the interview stage.

The questionnaire was presented in a dual language format; both in English and in Mandarin Chinese. This reflected the bilingual nature of the school in which the study took place. The research was focused on only one international school in the syndicate and, therefore, the potential respondents were limited to the staff members and the parents or guardians of students attending the school. In order to receive the greatest number of responses possible, the researcher opted for a probability sampling, in which all stakeholders connected to the school were contacted and offered to voluntarily participate in the study. The researcher worked in collaboration with the school office to distribute the questionnaire electronically to staff and parents. When dispersing the questionnaire link to potential participants via electronic mail, teachers and parents were invited to answer the survey alongside a disclaimer which explained the nature of the research. It noted that participation was voluntary, and that information collected from respondents would remain confidential; meaning that the identities of participants would not be revealed and will only be known by the researcher. The researcher decided upon keeping data confidential and not anonymous as it was necessary to contact those respondents who shared an interest in participating in the voluntary interview.

The questionnaire was created via the online platform of Microsoft Forms. This is a digital application with which members of the community were all familiar, since the school had adopted Microsoft Office as a digital service and had previously collected data from staff and parents using the same method. A further benefit of using Microsoft Forms was that it could instantly collect and display responses once they have been submitted. Creating graphs and charts of the data within this application made it an efficient and convenient choice for the researcher.

Bell & Waters (2018) confirm that using a resource such as Microsoft Forms to distribute questionnaires and collect data can be a useful tool for researchers since it allows them to 'track responses and display results graphically, which enables you to present your results professionally in your research report.'

Another positive aspect of selecting Microsoft Forms tool for questionnaires, is that while it can efficiently generate visual representations of data, there is an option to download a spreadsheet of the results, so that the researcher could organise the responses based on different criteria should he wish to do so.

Using Microsoft Forms as a platform to create and distribute questionnaires was instrumental in designing a user-friendly data collection interface. The questions displayed in different formats ensured that respondents were given a variety of styles of questioning. Youngman (1987) states that having a blend or assortment of questionnaire content is more conducive to getting a greater yield of responses. One should not succumb to 'excessive variation' when structuring a questionnaire. Therefore, the key is to find a balance in order to steer away from creating a tedious questionnaire, yet being careful not to producing an overwhelming experience for the participants.

Dawson (2019) proposes that offering benefits or an incentive to participants could establish a positive relationship with respondents and encourage a higher response rate to questionnaires. The stakeholders of YCIS Beijing may be interested to know about the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism and discover how much the community already knows about this topic, therefore the researcher explained to participants that if they were interested, they could receive feedback on the results of the study.

The questionnaire was initially piloted in order to help identify any linguistic or technological issues. Once school leadership had provided its approval, the link to the questionnaire was sent out to the community by electronic email and also shared via the school's digital newsletter.

The three target groups of participants for this study were sent similar, yet different questions. This decision was based on the fact that each set of potential participants have a different position, contribution and connection with the school. Teaching staff, the marketing/admissions department, and parents/guardians are all key components of a successful educational establishment and the knowledge, skills and experiences that each group accumulate will be different. Therefore, while there are similarities in the questions asked, the researcher made the decision to make slight yet appropriate alterations and distinctions to the questionnaires for each respective group of participants. The researcher understands the transient nature of international schools in terms of both the staff members and the students who are enrolled. This, therefore, means that results from the questionnaire offer a snapshot and an overview of the knowledge of stakeholders at YCIS Beijing during the time that the questionnaire was completed.

The questions used in the questionnaire stage of research are included in Appendix A, which shows the user interface that respondents viewed when completing the questionnaire. Included in the questionnaire was the option to volunteer participation in a follow-up interview. Respondents of the questionnaire could, therefore, choose to submit their answers which would conclude their involvement with the study, or they could state their willingness to receive further contact and provide their appropriate details.

Interview methodology

Using interviews as a component of gathering data can be a supportive research technique (Cohen & Manion, 2003). Interviews can be utilised as ‘the principal means of gathering information having direct bearing on the research objectives.’ They allow ‘for greater depth than is the case with other methods of data collection.’ Additionally, interviewing participants can ‘help to identify variables and relationships’ related to the hypothesis.

The researcher to conduct semi-structured interviews. This allowed for participants to be asked a set list of questions from which patterns could be identified. It also provided opportunities for the participant to provide other information in addition to the set questions. The researcher compiled a list

of general questions that he hoped could help to facilitate conversation and generate data which would help to build on information collected in the initial questionnaire stage. Additionally, interview questions can be used as a facilitator in clarifying any discrepancies or data which were unclear from the questionnaires. While these same questions were asked to all interview participants, a semi-structured interview allowed for more of an informal setting in which conversation became more natural and it provided opportunities for other questions to be posed.

The respondents talked openly about their own knowledge and opinions about the topic of bilingualism and multilingualism. The questions asked during the semi-structured interviews will be discussed in more detail later in the study. While this approach had the benefits of giving the research clear indications of what the participants know about the advantages of bilingualism, Cohen & Manion (2003) warn that a possible drawback to this technique is that 'it is prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer'. However, since the interviews were conducted by one researcher, this can eliminate the risk of numerous interviewers viewing responses in different ways.

The researcher contacted a Mandarin Chinese speaking peer to help conduct the interviews with participants who would feel more confident speaking in Mandarin Chinese as opposed to English. The list of initial questions was shared with the peer to ensure consistency amongst all potential interviews. However, of the participants who were able and willing to attend interviews, both English and Mandarin first-language interviewees were happy to be interviewed by the researcher in English. This outcome supported further consistency in making sure that each interview was conducted in the same manner. Conversely, one could make the observation that perhaps a participant who is being interviewed in their second language may not always be able to fully express themselves in the same way that a participant being interviewed in their first language could.

When conducting each interview, particularly with participants who were not speaking his or her first language, the researcher made it very clear that interviewees could take as much time as they needed when forming their responses.

Wragg (1987) deliberates over the challenges that face researchers when recording or collecting data during interviews. It is acknowledged that time

spent recording and transcribing interviews can be difficult. However, the researcher decided upon recording the interviews, as this method allowed the researcher to revisit exactly what was discussed during each interview and more easily identify patterns or trends in the responses.

When collecting information from participants through questionnaires, interviews and observations, one possible shortcoming that a research should be aware of, is the risk of the Hawthorne Effect occurring. This refers to when participants are aware of the research in which they are partaking in and may intentionally or subconsciously shift their behaviour or answers to display what they feel is expected, as opposed to sharing their true opinions, thoughts or habits. With this in mind, it is conceivable that some parents or staff members could alter their responses to questions in order to provide answers or comments which they feel are expected or more acceptable. In order to reduce the threat of having participants alter their answers during the study, the researcher made it clear that all responses they gave would be kept confidential. By remaining transparent and honest with the participants, it was hoped that parents, guardians and staff members involved in the study, would build up trust with the

researcher and share responses which truly reflected their experiences and views.

Additionally, selecting a location outside of school or allowing the participant to choose where and when the interview took place could help to build up levels of comfort for those participating in the study. Wragg (1987) makes clear the significance of finding a suitable and appropriate environment for the interview to take place. If the interviewer asks questions while sitting behind a desk in an office, this could make the interviewee feel more guarded with their answers. This reminds us that the set-up or layout of the environment is key in helping the interviewee feel more relaxed and, therefore, likely to provide a more honest response.

While there are spaces within the school which could offer a more informal or calm setting for interviews to be held, the fact that these locations are on campus could still cause discomfort for some participants. Talking about matters relating to the school while being situated there, may result in interviewees altering their answers. Therefore, the researcher decided to offer to meet with participants in a more informal place, away from the school campus, yet in a convenient location to which participants could

travel. This helped to foster a more comfortable atmosphere for those involved in the interview stage of the study.

However, researcher had to make certain changes and adapt the methodology due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As in many parts of the world, the virus had altered many aspects of life and how members of society engaged with each other. While positive changes had resulted in the school returning to lessons on campus, a resurgence in cases renewed concerns about health, and new safety regulations were put in place during various stages of the research. While there was no official lockdown, people were asked to limit social interactions outside of work. In order to maintain the well-being of the participants and researcher, it was important to offer interviewees the option of holding meetings online to minimise the risk to those involved with the study. Therefore, some of the interviews that took place were conducted online using Microsoft Teams. Other interviews were arranged in informal locations chosen by the participants in order to ensure their utmost comfort.

Conclusion of methodology

In this chapter, the researcher has explained the methodology that was undertaken during this study and has discussed the work and

recommendations of academics which helped to inform the chosen procedure. The researcher aimed to create a study that would produce a high response rate and minimise the risk of failings or weaknesses. The researcher accepted that there will always be areas that could lead to inaccuracies. By treating participants respectfully, following the code of ethics and heeding examples of successful methodology used in existing research, it was hoped that the results collated can provide a valid and reliable account and overview of what staff, parents and guardians know about the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism.

Presentation of Data

Presentation and Analysis of Data from the Questionnaire

This section of the paper will aim to review important findings and patterns from the results of the questionnaires. Through triangulating the data and analysing the responses from each group of participants, the researcher will aim to make links to the driving question of this study in order to draw conclusions.

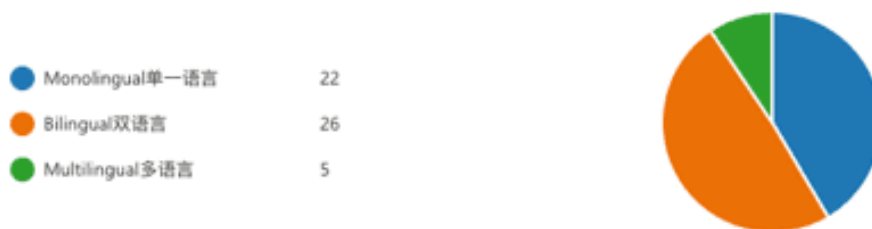
Educational Staff Questionnaire Responses

As mentioned, Microsoft Forms was the programme used to collect and analyse data during the questionnaire phase. At the time in which the questionnaires were being undertaken, there were 110 members of educational staff including leadership. From that total, the researcher received 53 responses.

In total, there were ten main questions that participants were required to answer, with some additional questions included if a certain response was given and more information was required.

The educational staff that participated held a variety of roles within the school and results also displayed that members of staff have been working at YCIS Beijing for a varying amount of time. Some respondents were still in the first year of employment at YCIS, while others in his or her thirteenth year at the school. However, there doesn't appear to be any obvious pattern in time spent at the school correlating with knowledge of bilingualism and multilingualism.

Which term do you feel best fits your own linguistic abilities?



Almost half of the respondents (49%) described themselves as bilingual, 42% identified as monolingual and 9% felt that the term multilingual best suited their linguistic ability. Unsurprisingly, the most commonly spoken languages by staff members were English and Mandarin Chinese.

However, the responses do highlight the international nature of the school as other languages were also spoken by some members of staff.

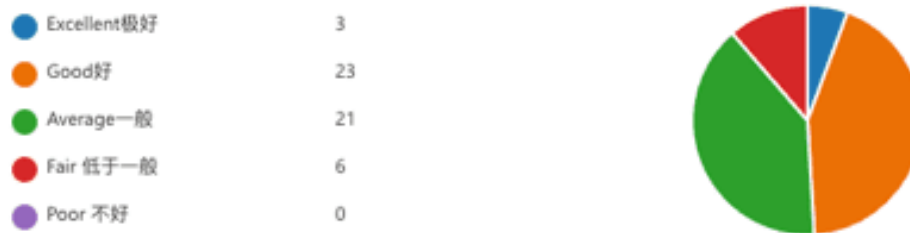
For example, three respondents were bilingual in English and French, and two were bilingual in Portuguese and English.

Did you participate in the BML (Bilingual & Multilingual Learners) training?



From those who completed the questionnaire, 21 participants completed the Bilingual and Multilingual Learners training, while 32 had not undertaken the training. As a bilingual school, the staff have a range of range of experiences with educational and their understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism, therefore one could suggest that from a managerial side, it would benefit the school to encourage more staff to participate in training. If more staff did decide to get involved with this training in the future, it could help to promote more discussion and generate a better understanding on the topic of bilingualism and multilingualism.

How would you rate your own knowledge and understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism?

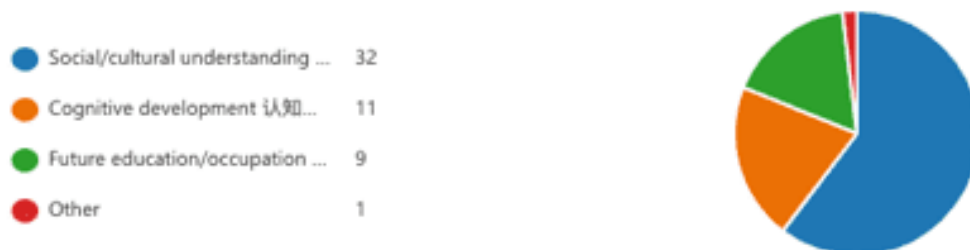


N= 53

When asked to rate their own knowledge and understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism, the majority of respondents regarded their comprehension of this topic as either good (43%) or average (40%).

From this data, however, we can see that most staff feel that this is an area in which they could learn more and develop their knowledge in this field.

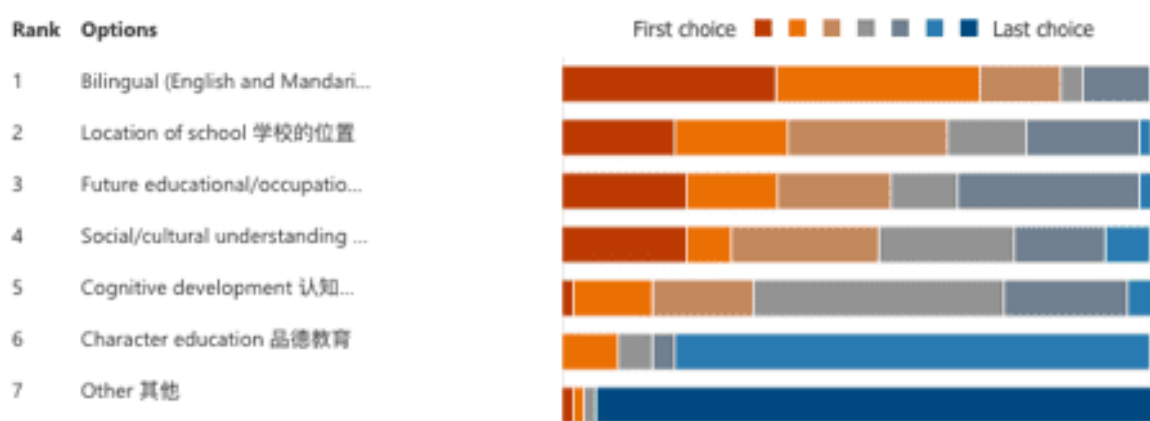
In your opinion, what do you see as the greatest advantage of being bilingual or multilingual?



When educational staff were then asked to state what they felt was the greatest advantage of being bilingual or multilingual, the majority of participants (60%) chose social/cultural understanding and cohesion as the greatest benefit. The second most selected option was cognitive development, and the data showed that 21% of respondents believed that cognitive development was the most advantageous aspect of being a polyglot. 'Future education/occupation prospects' was the option chosen by 17% of the participants. One respondent selected 'other' as the greatest advantage for bilingual and multilingual individuals, but without specifying or providing details. These results show that cognitive development is viewed as an important advantage by the educational staff, however, most of the respondents believed that the social/cultural understanding and cohesion is a greater benefit. On one hand, these responses could be the result of the educational staff having a good understanding of each type of

advantage and that they genuinely believe that social benefits are of greater importance. Alternatively, it could imply that perhaps the plethora of cognitive benefits are not fully known by the respondents to this questionnaire. Further questioning during the interview stages was necessary to help acquire more information about this point.

What do you believe are the parents' principal reasons for selecting YCIS as the school for their children? Please use your opinion of parents' motivations to join our school, and rank the reasons below in order, by sequencing the options into first, second, third place etc. Please also remember to stipulate and rank any other reason not listed.



The researcher wanted to also gauge how well the educational staff knows and understands the parents and families of students who attend the school. Does the workforce have a good awareness of what draws students to the school and does the staff's perception align with the true motivations? As a bilingual international school with a unique co-teaching

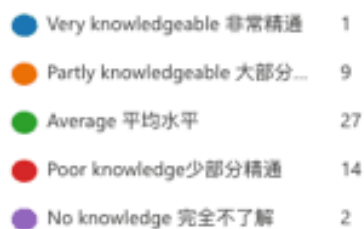
model, is that the biggest attraction to potential families? The staff members were given a list of reasons or motivations for choosing YCIS Beijing and then asked to rank what they believed to be the incentives for parents selecting YCIS Beijing in order of the most important to the least.

There were six options provided for the participants to order from greatest incentive to least significant reason. An option was also provided for respondents to select their own perceived reason for parents choosing the school. Microsoft Forms collated the data of the ranking from all participants and produced an overview of averages so that one can observe the overall most popular choices down to the least popular selection.

The majority of educational staff believed that the school's bilingual quality of teaching both English and Mandarin is the main reason why families choose YCIS Beijing for their child(ren). From the participants of this questionnaire, 35.8% of respondents ranked this as the biggest incentive and 34% sequenced it in second place, making it the overall most popular option in the list of staff's opinions for why parents choose the school. The response shows that cognitive development was overall ranked in fifth

place from the options. Educational staff considered the school's education programme as the least significant incentive to parents overall.

How knowledgeable are you with regard to the most recent research into the cognitive benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism?



The questionnaire next asked participants to describe their own knowledge about recent research into the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism.

We can see from the results that only one respondent rated himself or herself as very knowledgeable, whereas nine respondents considered themselves 'partly knowledgeable'. However, 51% described their knowledge as average, thus suggesting that the majority of educational staff currently believe there is more information and research that they could learn about the advantages of bilingualism and multilingualism.

Would you like to be more knowledgeable with regard to recent research into bilingualism and multilingualism?

Definitely 非常想	24
Possibly 很可能	25
Unsure 不确定	4
Definitely not 坚决不会	0
Not applicable 不适用	0



When asked if they would like to know more about recent research into bilingualism and multilingualism, the educational staff responded with a majority wanting to, or being open to learning more in this field. Of the respondents, 45% replied that they would definitely like to be more knowledgeable and 47% stated they would possibly be interested in building on their awareness and comprehension of this topic.

Taking on board the various responses from this questionnaire, the researcher has evidence that while the educational staff have varying degrees of existing knowledge about bilingualism and multilingualism, there is generally a desire to learn more. The researcher can use these findings to discuss details with the senior leadership team and inform the conclusion and recommendations of this study. It could be considered that the educational staff should be given more training in the field of bilingualism and multilingualism. As 47% of respondents were only 'possibly' interested

in learning more, one could suggest that the ‘definitely’ response should be much greater in a bilingual school. The school leadership team could therefore put a greater investment into the training of educational staff within the school and support a deeper understanding of the benefits for the bilingual and multilingual students the school aims to foster.

Parent/Guardian Questionnaire Responses

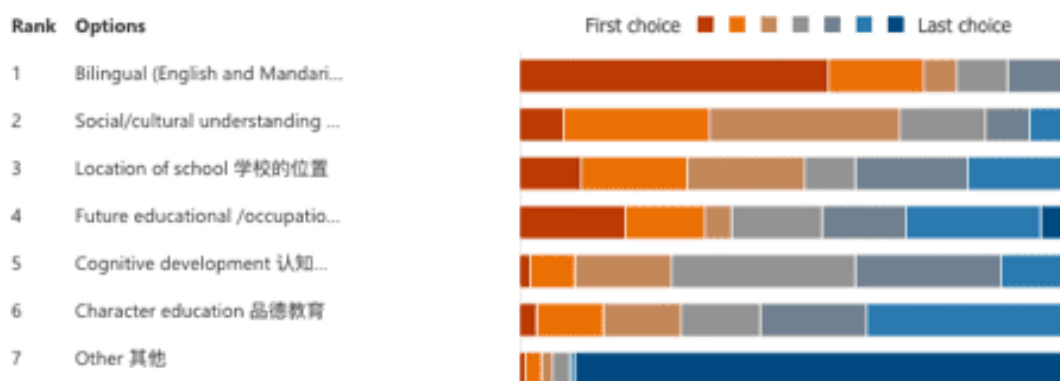
There are currently over 750 students enrolled at YCIS Beijing: some families having two or more students attending the school. Whereas all parents were invited to participate in the questionnaire, the researcher received a total of 99 responses from the parents and guardians of students at YCIS Beijing.

The questionnaire was sent digitally from the school office using each family’s contact details and was also supplied in the weekly digital newsletter. The purpose was to get an initial understanding of how much the parents and guardians of students at the school know about bilingualism and multilingualism, with a focus on the advantages of speaking two or more languages.

The first question asked respondents to disclose how long they had been sending their child or children to YCIS Beijing. It appears that some participants misunderstood this question, since some of the answers listed year levels, thus indicating that some parents believed that this question was asking them in which year level their child(ren) were studying. While the questionnaires were piloted before being sent out to respondents, the researcher must reflect on these results. In order to reduce errors such as this, the wording of this question could have been asked in a more unambiguous manner (in both English and Chinese). The results from this questionnaire, therefore may not be completely accurate, as instead of showing the number of years a family has attended the school, it states a grade or year level. The vast majority of respondents did answer the question correctly and the data confirms the transitory environment found in many international schools; some families have had pupils attending YCIS Beijing for a long time, while others have joined more recently.

Some respondents replied that their child(ren) had been a student at the school for several months, while other respondents answered that their child(ren) has been a pupil attending the school for thirteen years.

What are the main reasons for selecting YCIS as a school for your child(ren)? Please rank your reasons by placing the options into first, second, third place etc., and remember to stipulate and rank any other reason not listed below.



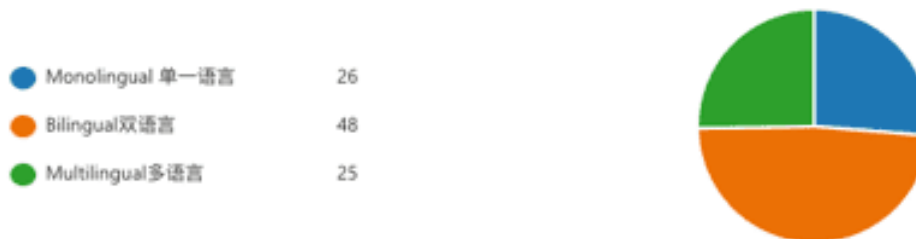
The next question required the parents to rank their reasons for choosing YCIS Beijing as the school for their child or children to attend. Microsoft Forms organised the responses and showed that overall, the option most commonly ranked in first place, was the bilingual element of this school, showing us that learning two languages is a big incentive to families. After analysing all of the responses to this question, cognitive development was ranked in fifth place. As mentioned previously, the fact that cognitive development is placed quite low in the rankings could suggest that parents have a deep understanding of all incentives and sincerely believe the other options are more important. Or one could insinuate that this group of respondents are not fully acquainted with recent research about the cognitive benefits of bilingualism. The interview stage of the study would be

vital in gaining a better understanding of what parents and guardians understand to be the cognitive benefits and how important they believe them to be. When the data from this question was compared to the educational staff's response to their opinion of parental motivations, we can see that the perception and reality are relatively aligned and that the educational staff appear to have a good knowledge of what appeals to the parents.

Parents were offered an 'other' option if there felt there was another motivation behind selecting YCIS Beijing. From the responses received, the researcher can see that for some families, the arts department was an incentive and the International General Certificate of Secondary education (IGCSE) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programme was also a draw. These are two internationally recognised school education programmes. When all data was collated, the option of 'other' was ranked in last place. From studying the results to this question, the ranking implies that respondents feel that an improved social/cultural understanding and potential benefits for future education and occupation prospects are of greater significance to parents when compared with the advantages to cognitive development and function that being bilingual and multilingual can

bring. Only 2% of respondents ranked cognitive development as the most important reason for selecting the bilingual school for their child(ren), whereas 34% of respondents ranked social advantages as their first or second reason for choosing the school.

Which term do you feel best fits your own linguistic abilities?



Parents were then asked to describe their linguistic abilities. The results show that 26% are monolingual, 25% are multilingual and the largest group of parents feel they are bilingual (48%). Considering that almost 73% of respondents speak two or more languages, the researcher could see that the majority of the parents were bilingual or multilingual and therefore their experiences and knowledge of being bilingualism and multilingualism were explored in the interview stages.

Unsurprisingly, the language which was most widely spoken at home by parents was Mandarin which was selected by almost three quarters of respondents. The next most commonly spoken language was English at 43%. Korean was spoken by 9% and Cantonese was used by 8% of parents. Japanese and European languages were noted by a smaller number of participants. This again, reflects the international nature of the school.

How would you rate your own knowledge and understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism?

● Excellent 极好	23
● Good 好	44
● Average 一般	27
● Fair 低于一般	3
● Poor 不好	2



When asked to rate their knowledge and understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism, the results showed that 23% responded 'excellent' and that the majority (44%) of respondents would classify their knowledge as good. With around 94% of participants rating their knowledge as average or above, we can gather that the parents feel confident in their knowledge of this topic in general terms.

How knowledgeable are you with regard to the most recent research into the cognitive benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism?



Parents were also given a follow-up question to express their knowledge more specifically about the research into the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism. Responses to this question showed that parents are less confident in their knowledge about studies into the cognitive advantages that bilingual and multilingual individuals may enjoy. This could indicate that if parents did have more facts about recent research into the cognitive benefits, they may rank cognitive advantages of bilingualism and multilingualism more highly if they were given the same questionnaire again.

Would you like to be more knowledgeable with regard to recent research into bilingualism and multilingualism?



Parents were requested to share how willing they would be to gain more knowledge about recent research and studies into bilingualism and multilingualism. 60% of respondents responded with 'definitely yes', whilst 28% of parents answered that they would 'possibly' like to gain more knowledge in this area and twelve percent were unsure. When paired with the answers from the educational staff, these data helped to demonstrate that there was an enthusiasm and thirst for knowledge in this subject area from the school community which supported the researcher when developing follow-up actions based on the findings in this paper.

Parents were then invited to share their contact details if they were happy to volunteer to participate in the interview stage of the research. The responses helped the researcher to compile a list of willing participants from this section of stakeholders.

Marketing/Admissions Questionnaire Responses

The Marketing and Admissions Department is a small team that works within the school. While some of the questions are the same as those posed to educational staff and parents/guardians, the researcher took the decision to send a separate questionnaire to this group. This is due to the role of people working within this department and the experiences and interactions that shape their position and responsibilities. The researcher acknowledges that, due to the small nature of the team and responses received, it is not appropriate to use percentages as a way of analysing the data. Instead, their responses were compared with the information garnered from the other two groups of participants in this study. By doing so, one was able to identify patterns or trends among all three groups of participants.

While there were not enough responses to share numbers for such a small department, it was found that, from those who responded to the questionnaire, the answers align with the overall data collected from the educational staff and parent/guardian groups. At the time of the study, there were six members of this department and three respondents participated.

Participants of this questionnaire believed they had average or excellent knowledge of bilingualism and multilingualism and selected social/cultural and future educational/occupational prospects as the greatest benefits of speaking two or more languages. One respondent felt their knowledge was excellent and two respondents rated their knowledge as average.

The Marketing and Admissions Department also shared similar views when asked to rank the parental incentives of choosing YCIS Beijing as an educational establishment for their children to attend.

Finally, the respondents of this questionnaire showed that there is potential for growth in their knowledge of current research about bilingualism and multilingualism and indicated their interest in receiving more information about studies on this topic. Two participants stated that they would ‘definitely’ like to be more knowledgeable and one respondent answered that they would ‘possibly’ be interested in learning more about recent research into bilingualism and multilingualism.

Conclusion of Questionnaire Results

From looking at the responses to the three groups of respondents at the questionnaire stage of the study, the researcher could conclude on the following:

Educational staff generally felt that they have some knowledge about the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual, however, overall, they placed other benefits above cognitive benefits. The interviewer wanted to gain a deeper understanding of what the educational staff understood to be the cognitive benefits of bilingualism. Additionally, the responses from educational staff questionnaire showed that 47% of respondents would only 'possibly' be interested in learning more about recent research into bilingualism and multilingualism. One would think that staff invested in the bilingual school would place a greater value into studying more on this topic, and therefore the senior leadership team would need to have conversations about this data and how the school can move forward with promoting more training and understanding in this field.

Parents and guardians similarly feel quite confident in their knowledge of bilingualism and multilingualism, however, the majority of 60% showed that

they would want to learn more about recent research, therefore showcasing a demand and need to understand more.

The stakeholders of YCIS Beijing have varying degrees of confidence in their knowledge of bilingualism and multilingualism. In total, over 150 people took part in the questionnaire process. When required to show what they feel are the advantages of bilingualism and multilingualism, the preponderance of the school community place a greater value on fostering a better social/cultural understanding and gaining potential future educational/occupational prospects over the value of latent cognitive benefits that people may enjoy if they develop strong linguistic skills in two or more languages. The majority of respondents shared that they would be happy for the opportunity to enhance their understanding of up-to-date research about bilingualism and multilingualism.

Presentation and Analysis of Data from Interviews

The questionnaire responses provided some useful information which could be further elucidated and expanded on during the interviews. Once the researcher had collected all responses from the questionnaires, it was possible to look over which respondents had supplied their contact details and agreed to be contacted with regard to volunteering for the interview stage of this study.

The researcher wanted to ensure that there was a broad range of people invited to participate in the interviews. The responses from the questionnaire allowed the researcher to select people who had spent varying amounts of time at the school. It was also possible to choose people with different linguistic backgrounds based on the information supplied at the initial. The researcher also made a point to ensure that representatives from different groups within the school community were interviewed so that it gave a clearer indication of what the stakeholders understood about the advantages of bilingualism and multilingualism.

In total, the researcher conducted twenty interviews including members from the marketing/admissions department, parents and guardians, and educational staff. The researcher decided upon asking a greater number of educational staff compared to the other two groups of stakeholders, as he wanted to find out the knowledge that professional teachers knew on this topic. Eleven members of educational staff, eight parents and one member of the marketing department were interviewed.

The semi-structured interviews were recorded with consent, so that the researcher could listen repeatedly to interview responses and create a transcript which made it easier to identify key points or patterns.

The interviews ranged in length and gave the researcher a deeper understanding of the knowledge that stakeholders of YCIS Beijing possess in terms of bilingualism and multilingualism. Holding the interviews allowed the researcher to examine more carefully the experiences of the respondents, understand the nuances of each person's interactions and background with linguistics. It also meant that the researcher could gain a better insight into what exactly the participants feel and know about the cognitive benefits of bilingualism since it had not been selected as a key advantage during the questionnaire stage.

In this section, the researcher will share and analyse the responses from the main questions asked during the interviews. Transcripts of the interviews can be found in the Appendix B.

Question 1: In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

This question was important to ask, since it allowed the researcher to clearly understand what each interviewee believes to be the benefits of speaking two or more languages. The interview responses provided the researcher with answers that were not possible during the questionnaire stage. Interviewees were categorised to stakeholder groups so that data could be compared and potential patterns could be identified. One would expect that professional teachers at a bilingual school would generally be more knowledgeable than parents and administrative staff.

Building on from the questionnaire responses that gaining better 'social/cultural understanding and cohesion' was important for the members of the YCIS Beijing community, during the interviews, all participants during

this stage mentioned social benefits as an advantage of being bilingual or multilingual. Interviewee C, a parent who speaks English as a second language, explained, 'with language, you can access culture. You can understand better, the deeper meaning. It helps you to understand the culture and to navigate more easily'.

Interviewee J, an educational staff member with an English as a first language background, agreed and stated:

“First benefit, I would say is cultural understanding, open-mindedness, more empathy for people who come from outside your comfort zone. So, I find that students who are bilingual or multilingual are usually more open to socialising or collaborating with others who are not from own mother tongue countries. Secondly, I do think it does bring a certain sense of maturity as a consequence. It means they come from some sort of a background where either they have parents that come from different cultures; therefore, they're getting more input from different perspectives. Or it means that they've travelled themselves, so they're more mature. They're less afraid and more willing to take risks.”

Some participants recognised and listed the potential educational or occupational benefits as well as a better social and cultural understanding as an advantage of being bilingual. Interviewee E, a Mandarin-first language educational member of staff, shared: 'I think having the ability to learn another language can open your mind. For example, my mother is

monolingual, so she does not have access to as many opportunities as bilingual speakers. Language is like a key to another world.'

Interviewee Q, an English first-language parent emphasised the importance of their child developing bilingual skills:

'The big one for me in choosing a bilingual education is that it sets her up for the future. Because if two people with identical degrees let's say are going for a job and one is bilingual, although it might not be a company where being bilingual is necessary but you realise it gives you a step advantage, you could participate if that language is needed and shows that you also have that open-mindedness that being bilingual brings.'

Interviewee A, a parent who speaks Mandarin as a first language, expressed an opinion of the benefits of being bilingual or multilingual, through explaining the prospective educational/occupational opportunities and touching upon the cultural/social aspects:

'Language is basically a tool. Having this tool in your toolbox gives you access to a lot more things, such as interpersonal communication, academic pursuits, job opportunities, etc. Language is also more than just a tool. It is also a vehicle of culture in the broad sense. Whether you acquire a language or learn it, you are exposed to or immersed in the culture behind it. You get to know another way of looking at the world. And this sometimes could be beneficial.'

There were responses which did acknowledge the cognitive advantages that speaking two or more languages may bring. Interviewee N, an educational staff member who speaks English as a first language,

explained: 'I think there are benefits in terms of just brain function, especially when those languages have been developed as a child. The ability to switch to and from between I think is the thing that helps to develop your brain better than if you only speak in one language.' The same interviewee also listed the cultural understanding as another benefit.

This response demonstrates that there some acknowledgement of the cognitive benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism by some members of the community. However, the majority of interviewees did not list this as an advantage during their response to this question. One educational member of staff did mentioned that

Question 2: What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

The researcher wanted to explicitly discuss this topic in order to discover what information each interviewee had about potential advantages to cognitive development and function which can result from being a balance bilingual or multilingual.

Respondents had some inclinations or had completed some research in this field, but many admitted that they did not know a great deal about this. When sharing their thoughts, some interviewees explained that they could assume the benefits but perhaps were not able to back it up with studies. Interviewee Q, an educational staff member, shared, 'I don't know a lot about that, except I've read the research that shows children who have learned multiple languages do tend to be better problem solvers.'

Interviewee B, an educational member of staff who speaks English as a first language, had done some reading on cognitive benefits and stated: 'There are also a lot of studies that show when you are bilingual/multilingual, you are able to focus, your ability to focus on tasks is greater.'

Interviewee T, a teacher at YCIS Beijing, considered the possible cognitive benefits and suggested that if you are bilingual or multilingual, 'it keeps the brain active by building up memory with vocabulary and word banks.'

Interviewee T added that it was not an area that had been personally researched, however, this demonstrated that there is some awareness of

how bilingual proficiency may have an impact on cognitive development and cognitive function.

When interviewed, Interviewee M, an educational member of staff also shared that from personal experience, she had some knowledge into the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, including for older people. However, she did not know about the details of how being bilingual or multilingual could help to delay the onset of dementia. She commented,

‘...there are a lot of ways to try to prevent dementia. Learning more than one language is something that helps to keep your brain sharp. For whatever reason, I don’t really understand how but it does. For kids growing up, obviously the brain can learn a lot very fast at a young age and we slow down as we get older. So, learning a language from a young age is really the best time to do it.’

Another teacher, Interviewee K, articulated her thoughts on this topic and while they did not know of specific studies in this field, she was able to use her own experiences with bilingualism in a more general way.

‘Your brain is a muscle, so you’re exercising it. I think by being able to switch between different languages, you’re exercising your brain. So, people who run a lot are going to have amazing lungs. People who use their brains in different manners are going to be probably a less likely candidate for dementia and all that other kind of stuff because they’re using those muscles, it’s not sitting dormant.’

The responses to this question show that that while the majority of respondents were able to speculate that the cognitive benefits of bilingualism could be to improve focus and problem-solving skills, only some respondents were aware of the research which provide evidence of this. Additionally, only a minority of respondents were able to list the cognitive benefits that could be enjoyed by older bilinguals in terms of preventing memory loss. This illustrates that the full range of potential cognitive advantages are not widely known by the YCIS Beijing community. In total, there were four members of educational staff who, when asked to consider cognitive benefits, discussed cognitive function and memory as a potential advantage for bilingual or multilingual individuals. These teachers did not know specific research that supported these details but had more of a general idea from personal events and some professional training.

Question 3: Have you undertaken research into bilingualism and multilingualism?

This question was posed to the interviewees to understand how the respondents have gained their understanding on this topic. The researcher wanted to know whether the participants had actually researched

bilingualism and multilingualism, or whether their knowledge was based on their personal experiences or a mixture of academic reading and any first-hand involvement with speaking two or more languages. One may expect that the non-educational participants may not have researched or read about the topic of bilingualism and multilingualism, however, the researcher wanted to ask all participants to get a full picture of knowledge within all stakeholder groups.

Some educational staff commented that for their job, they have studied bilingualism and multilingualism, including the Bilingual and Multilingual Learners (BML) course which the school has offered. Interviewee B, an educational member of staff explained:

First of all, I did an 'EAL in The Mainstream'. The BML course is something that I've also completed. Other than that, I've done casual research on my own using things such as websites really.

While some teachers had attended courses or read about recent research into bilingualism and multilingualism, six of the eleven teachers explained that they had not undertaken any research or recent reading on the topic of bilingualism and multilingualism.

When interviewing the parents and guardians, there were some who had not undertaken research in the area of bilingualism and multilingualism, however, others remarked that when they became parents, they had a greater interest in the development of children growing up bilingual or multilingual and so this became an incentive to do some reading on this topic. Interviewee O, a parent, explained that her concerns that could be described by the balloon theory, caused her to start researching when becoming a mother. She noted further concerns that learning a language in an international environment may also mean that some cultural understandings may be lost.

She explained:

I read a lot before having our first child because I was very worried. I was worried it would be too many languages. I don't remember the authors, but there's an American lady who wrote twice about the Chinese American experience and about how they could learn the language but not the cultural content of the language. So although the daughters came back to China later, the daughters spoke fluent Chinese in the States but when coming back to China, they couldn't really understand all of the meaning of what was being told to them, because they didn't have all of the references.

Interviewee O later discussed that understanding personal research helped to alleviate her concerns. Another parent, Interviewee R, shared: 'For us, it came as a matter of fact. We grew up as bilingual. For me, it came as a

natural thing because we grew up like this. For us, learning another language is a reality. We didn't do any research or something. Now with the kids, I'm more like interested in the topic.'

Interviewee G, who is from a bilingual background shared the same sentiment and articulated that while being bilingual, it was having children that made them think more deeply about linguistics and how that may have an impact on a child's development: 'I think it was probably after having the children that you actually give it more thought: how should you approach teaching your kids two languages so that they don't get mixed up? Then we realised that no, actually it's ok to expose them to different languages as long as they know who they are speaking it to. Even if you are living in a multicultural or multilingual environment, the kids don't get mixed up, they kind of do it naturally.'

Interviewee D, a parent who speaks Mandarin as a first language, explained that while he had not undertaken much reading into research on this topic, their own personal experiences as a bilingual person and fostering a bilingual family have provided him with valuable discernments into the advantages of this phenomena:

‘I think my understanding from my own experiences has shown me that many of us who are in this situation feel, I think quite privileged to have such deep insights into both cultures and we of course try to promote the good and help each other understand each other while also recognising the shortcomings of both cultures, so yes it’s personal experience.’

From looking at patterns in the responses, the researcher could see that there were some members of the school community who have undertaken research, and others who had not done any reading on this topic, but from their own personal experiences and observations, had drawn conclusions about bilingualism and multilingualism. Again, while some teachers had speculated or used their own experiences to suggest that delaying the symptoms or onset of dementia could be an advantage for bilinguals, they were not able to talk about the recent research or studies that backed up their ideas. While parents had undertaken research, the purpose was to discover if their child or children would suffer from cognitive deficits as they developed. No parents lists the studies that suggest cognitive advantages such as potentially delaying the onset of dementia.

Question 4: If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

The data from the questionnaires had illustrated that many members of the school community would be interested in learning more about studies into bilingualism and multilingualism. By conducting additional interviews, the researcher wanted to assess the opinions of participants on how learning more about research into bilingualism and multilingualism could impact the YCIS Beijing community.

Interviewee S, a representative of the Marketing/Admissions department, considered the effect of sharing more information about bilingualism and multilingualism with the school community, and explained, ‘I think that it will be good for parents to know about the data, since we are a bilingual school. We have seen recently from shifting online due to the pandemic that communicating is more important than before. I think if parents get a better understanding of bilingualism, they will see the importance of ensuring a solid foundation of their first language in order to benefit from the advantages of being bilingual.’

Interviewee C, a parent, agreed that parents and guardians may appreciate more clarity on this topic, 'I think having the information and knowing what to do is the first step in actually doing it. You need to have that information and when someone tells you 'these are the benefits, and this is what you can do' it's straight forward.'

Interviewee noted that there could be benefits for both teachers and parents if provided with more data from studies into bilingualism and multilingualism:

'I think it would assure parents that they are doing the right thing. Sometimes they might have concerns that their child's language skills are not as strong in their mother tongue as a child in a monolingual school. But learning more about this topic will let them know that being bilingual has advantages. For teachers, I think it will also help them to get a better understanding about the job and to learn more.'

One educational member of staff considered the impact that learning more about bilingualism and multilingualism could have on the different stakeholder groups within the community. Interviewee B stated:

'As a teacher you always feel there's a need to do stuff, I've got to do this and this and our leadership is saying I need to do this and this, but I think we are missing the 'why' of everything. If we can really be solid on 'why' we are emphasising these things, I think it would be a little bit more motivating

– this is why I’m doing it. For parents as well, I think it would really help them to understand it’s not just sending your child to a bilingual school, there’s more you’ve got to do than that. For the marketing department I suppose it would help them to sell our school. This is not just something that’s unique in a ‘showy way’, it’s actually better for your child.’

This response highlights the positive impacts that having more information about bilingualism and multilingualism could bring to the school community.

Some parents argued that having more details about bilingualism and multilingualism and sharing the research in this field could have positive outcomes, if the motivations of parents selecting the school is to help foster true bilingual skills in their children. Interviewee G pointed out: ‘It really depends very much on the purpose why the parent would like the child to speak more than one language. Technically, in just a China environment, or the US or the UK you don’t need a second language. So, either interests, or there is a possible need or goal to learn other languages or for certain studies. That kind of affects the level of language for the child. Once you get that sorted out and you have parents who are really into, you know strongly believe that the children should be completely bilingual and not just surface level bilingual, then you can have a conversation. If they are just happy to say I just want daily conversation or they have enough to buy a meal, this is not really a topic they would be interested to explore.’

From the information gathered at the interviewing stage of the study, the researcher was able to hold many in-depth conversations and gain much more detailed information from participants, which was not possible from solely relying on questionnaires. The researcher observed that members of the YCIS Beijing community possess some knowledge about bilingualism and multilingualism, based on some personal studies, professional requirements and life experiences. However, overall, as with the questionnaire responses, the responses in interviews exhibited that the vast majority of stakeholders were keen to learn more about research on the topic. The positive outcomes from learning more which were listed included offering support to parents and reassuring them that becoming bilingual is advantageous. It was also mentioned that knowing more about the benefits to being a polyglot could be used as a motivation when parents are encouraging their children to study. Other responses explained that knowing more about research in this field could offer clarity and an inspiration to educators, while also providing more incentives for the marketing/admissions department when looking to recruit prospective parents.

It was interesting to note that, of the twenty interview participants, two educators mentioned that being bilingual or multilingual could possibly help

with maintain cognitive function. Only one interviewee was able to explicitly discuss that one cognitive advantage of bilingualism is the potential to slow down the onset of dementia. The interviewee, a teacher, disclosed that this was not due to professional requirement, but due to having a relative who suffered from cognitive deficits caused by dementia, and this resulted in personal research.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has endeavoured to plan, undertake and analyse the results of an investigation within the context of a bilingual international school located in Beijing, China. The researcher hoped to answer the question: to what extent do the stakeholders of YCIS Beijing know about the advantages of being bilingual and multilingual?

The researcher predicted that while the community might have already held some awareness of the advantages generally, there would be less knowledge held on the cognitive benefits specifically that can result from being bilingual or multilingual.

When undertaking the research, it became clear that all members of the school community had a vested interest in the topic of bilingualism and multilingualism. This appears to be for a number of reasons; whether it's due to own personal linguistic experiences or through the nature of belonging to an international school that promotes a bilingual environment. It was apparent to the researcher that parents and teachers have varied experiences and opinions in this field and were keen to get the opportunity

to discuss their thoughts about the topic of bilingualism and the benefits that being a bilingual or a polyglot may bring.

One bilingual parent (Interviewee D) succinctly summarised his thoughts on the school's bilingual ethos and the purpose of the study:

One of the key reasons why we chose the school for our kids is the bilingual programme. If our kids can develop with bilingual skills, I will be a super happy parent. I think the school does promote that part of the curriculum and I think that should continue to be a focus. I think your topic is something that I will be interested to hear about. That could maybe enhance how we convince our children to take both languages seriously and make their best efforts.

Based on the findings, the researcher can draw the following conclusions.

1. All members of the school community have a strong cognizance of the social and cultural benefits to being bilingual or multilingual.

Additionally, most participants in the study believe this benefit to be of great importance in today's interconnected world. The development of globalisation has also meant that being bilingual or multilingual can possibly provide educational or occupational opportunities, and this was also recognised by many of the participants of this study.

2. When asked overtly about cognitive advantages to being bilingual, the participants of this study listed problem solving and improved focus as a benefit that could be enjoyed by those who speak two or more languages. There were some interviewees who shared personal stories which had brought to their attention the cognitive benefits for bilinguals including older bilinguals. However, the majority of participants were not aware of other potential cognitive advantages discussed in this paper such as delaying the onset of dementia symptoms and reducing the severity of poststroke aphasia.
3. Within the community it appeared that there is collectively a sound knowledge of the social advantages which many of the participants had experienced or witnessed first-hand. Many discussed the benefits they had enjoyed from travelling and communicating with various people and listed educational and occupational advantages which were afforded to them due to their bilingual or multilingual skills. Some respondents had undertaken personal or professional research on this topic which helped to enhance their understanding of the benefits. One could possibly surmise that there is less comprehension of the advantages which are less noticeably observed

or visibly evident, such as cognitive benefits which could be argued are not as immediate or observable.

Based on these findings, the researcher has therefore concluded that there was a good foundation of understanding about certain advantages of being bilingual and multilingual at the establishment under consideration. In particular, the social and possibly economic benefits. However, as hypothesised, the cognitive benefits were less widely known by the participants of this study. In particular, the cognitive advantages for older bilinguals was not common knowledge among the stakeholders of the school community.

Recommendations

In response to the information gathered in this study, the researcher considered recommendations which could benefit the school community.

Firstly, the data gathered was shared with the leadership team of the school, who had been instrumental in supporting the researcher in conducting the study.

The findings that suggested cognitive benefits are not widely known by the school stakeholders was discussed with the school leadership team. It was decided that workshops and information sessions should be put in place to ensure that educational staff, the marketing department and parents were provided with more recent research in the field of bilingualism and multilingualism.

The researcher felt there were other points raised in the study which were necessary to share with the school leadership team. During the interview stages, some parents had raised concerns over the effectiveness of the co-teaching model in which two languages are simultaneously being used in a classroom setting. This was an important conversation to hold since the school had been pursuing ways to adapt the co-teaching model to follow a

pedagogy more similar to the dual language bilingual programme, which was explored earlier in this paper and in which an activity or lesson would be delivered in one language so that students understand that they will be required to use and develop that particular language during that time.

The researcher also worked with the school leadership team to organise information sessions, in which the findings of the research and the potential benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism would be shared with all members of the YCIS Beijing community. The researcher also wanted to make it clear to the community that just attending an international bilingual school will not automatically provide these benefits for students enrolled. A student must have a good proficiency of the languages to enjoy the benefits and this is something that the researcher wanted to explain to all stakeholders.

In October 2021, the researcher held an information session in which the findings of the research were shared with educational staff (See Appendix C). Representatives from the Marketing and Admissions Department were also present. The data gathered in this study were displayed and the cognitive advantages were also shared with the audience. Finally, the researcher explained the need to adapt the co-teaching model and shared

some practical ideas on how to foster a bilingual learning environment by supporting language learners.

In November 2021, the researcher was asked to meet with a representative from another establishment from within the wider educational foundation of which YCIS Beijing is a member. The researcher again discussed the findings of the research and the range advantages, including cognitive advantages, which bilingual and multilingual individuals could benefit. Following on from this meeting, the researcher held an online information session which connected staff across the foundation, so that the wider community could learn more about the recent research in this field.

The findings of the research were shared with management and discussions were held with regard to general knowledge and understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism within the school. While continued pandemic procedures have caused many issues, the school will continue to offer training to staff on how best to support bilingual and multilingual learners and share more about the benefits of bilingualism, including the cognitive advantages, with all stakeholders.

In February 2022, the researcher, along with a member of the leadership team, provided data from the research and facts about the potential benefits of bilingualism with schools from across the educational foundation during an online professional development webinar conference. As well as the results from the study and information relating to recent research into the topic of bilingualism and multilingualism, attendees to the webinar were also provided with ways in which to support bilingual learners and help to strengthen linguistic skills. A certification of providing the training can be found in Appendix D.

The researcher set out to uncover what the school community understands to be the advantages of bilingualism and multilingualism. While the researcher acknowledges there may be some areas of weakness in this study, such as some questions in the questionnaire perhaps requiring more clarity, one can consider that the study has successfully collected information from the school community which resulted in a better comprehension of what the stakeholders of YCIS Beijing know and think about the benefits of being bilingual or multilingual. Following the study, there has been a greater emphasis to ensure new members to the community have a better understanding of recent research into bilingualism

and multilingualism through providing information sessions and a concerted effort to support educators in how to foster bilingual and multilingual learners through workshops and training.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Questionnaire and interface for Parents

Bilingualism and Multilingualism Questionnaire for Parents

The survey will take approximately 4 minutes to complete.
These questions will help me as part of my master's research into bilingualism and multilingualism. Please note that this is completely voluntary and the answers you supply will not have an impact on your role as a parent and stakeholder. The information you provide will remain confidential and you will not be identified in the research paper, however, you may be contacted and invited to participate in a follow-up interview.
这些问题将帮助我作为我的硕士研究生双语和多语能力的一部分。请注意，这是完全自愿的。您提供的信息将保密，研究论文中不会透露您的身份，但是，我们可能会联系您并邀请您参加后续采访。

...

* Required

1. How many years have you been a parent at YCIS? 您的子女在耀中上学几年了? *

Enter your answer

2. What are the main reasons for selecting YCIS as a school for your child(ren)? Please rank your reasons by placing the options into first, second, third place etc., and remember to stipulate and rank any other reason not listed below. 您选择耀中作为您子女的学校最主要原因是什么? 请从家长的角度，按第一、第二、第三等顺序排列以下原因，并记住包含未列出的其他原因。

Future educational /occupational prospects 未来教育/职业前景

Social/cultural understanding and cohesion 社会/文化理解和凝聚力

Location of school 学校的位置

Cognitive development 认知发展

Bilingual (English and Mandarin) education 双语教学 (英文和普通话)

Character education 品德教育

Other 其他

3. If you included 'other' in the previous question, please state: 如果您在以上问题中选择'其他'，请说明:

Enter your answer

4. Which term do you feel best fits your own linguistic abilities? 您觉得哪个词最能代表您的语言能力? *

- ☐ Monolingual 单一语言
- ☐ Bilingual 双语言
- ☐ Multilingual 多语言

5. If you answered 'bilingual' or 'multilingual', please specify which languages:
如果您答案是双语言或者多语言请说明哪些语言:

Enter your answer

6. What languages are spoken at home? (please select all that apply)
您在家庭中讲什么语言? (请选择所有适用选项) *

- ☐ English 英语
- ☐ Mandarin 普通话
- ☐ Cantonese 广东话
- ☐ French 法语
- ☐ German 德语
- ☐ Italian 意大利语
- ☐ Spanish 西班牙语
- ☐ Portuguese 葡萄牙语
- ☐ Japanese 日语
- ☐ Korean 韩语/朝鲜语
- ☐ Swedish 瑞典语
- ☐ Norwegian 挪威语
- ☐ Hindi 北印度语
- ☐ Urdu 乌尔都语
- ☐ Afrikaans 南非语
- ☐ Russian 俄罗斯语
- ☐ Other

7. How would you rate your own knowledge and understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism?
您将如何评价自己对双语和多语种的了解和理解? *

- ☐ Excellent 极好
- ☐ Good 好
- ☐ Average 一般
- ☐ Fair 低于一般
- ☐ Poor 不好

8. How knowledgeable are you with regard to the most recent research into the cognitive benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism? 您对双语和多语的认知益处的最新研究了解多少? *

- ☐ Very knowledgeable 非常精通
- ☐ Partly knowledgeable 大部分精通
- ☐ Average 平均水平
- ☐ Poor knowledge 少部分精通
- ☐ No knowledge 完全不了解

9. Would you like to be more knowledgeable with regard to recent research into bilingualism and multilingualism? 您是否希望对最近关于双语和多语的研究有更多的了解? *

- ☐ Definitely yes 非常希望
- ☐ Possibly 很可能会
- ☐ Unsure 不确定
- ☐ Definitely not 肯定不会
- ☐ Not applicable 不适用

10. If you are willing to participate in a voluntary interview about this topic, please leave your email details below: 如果您不介意我联系你参加一个关于这个主题的自愿面试, 请在下面留下您的电子邮件地址:

Enter your answer

Submit

Questionnaire and interface for educational staff

Bilingualism and Multilingualism Survey for Educational Staff

The survey will take approximately 4 minutes to complete.

These questions will help me as part of my master's research into bilingualism and multilingualism. Please note that this is completely voluntary. The information you provide will remain confidential and you will not be identified in the research paper, however, you may be contacted and invited to participate in a follow-up interview.

这些问题将帮助我作为我的硕士研究生双语和多语能力的一部分。请注意，这是完全自愿的。您提供的信息将保密，研究论文中不会透露您的身份，但是，我们可能会联系您并邀请您参加后续采访。

* Required

1. How many years have you worked for YCIS? 您在耀中工作几年了? *

Enter your answer

2. What is your current role within the foundation? 您目前的职位是什么? *

- ☐ Teacher 教师
- ☐ Educational leadership 教育领导
- ☐ Student support 学生支持

3. Which term do you feel best fits your own linguistic abilities? 您觉得哪个词最能代表您的语言能力? *

- ☐ Monolingual 单一语言
- ☐ Bilingual 双语
- ☐ Multilingual 多语言

4. If you answered 'bilingual' or 'multilingual', please specify which languages:
如果您答案是双语或者多语言请说明哪些语言:

Enter your answer

5. What languages are spoken at home? (please select all that apply)
您在家庭中讲什么语言? (请选择所有适用选项) *

- ☐ English 英语
- ☐ Mandarin 普通话
- ☐ Cantonese 广东话
- ☐ French 法语
- ☐ German 德语
- ☐ Italian 意大利语
- ☐ Spanish 西班牙语
- ☐ Portuguese 葡萄牙语
- ☐ Japanese 日语
- ☐ Korean 韩语/朝鲜语
- ☐ Swedish 瑞典语
- ☐ Norwegian 挪威语
- ☐ Afrikaans 南非语
- ☐ Other

6. Did you participate in the BML (Bilingual & Multilingual Learners) training?
您是否参加过BML (双语和多语学习者) 培训? *

- ☐ Yes 是
- ☐ No 否

7. How would you rate your own knowledge and understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism?
您将如何评价自己对双语和多语种的了解和理解? *

- ☐ Excellent 极好
- ☐ Good 好
- ☐ Average 一般
- ☐ Fair 低于一般
- ☐ Poor 不好

8. In your opinion, what do you see as the greatest advantage of being bilingual or multilingual?
您认为双语或多语的最大优势是什么? *

- ☐ Social/cultural understanding and cohesion 社会/文化理解和凝聚力
- ☐ Cognitive development 认知发展
- ☐ Future education/occupation prospects 未来教育/职业前景
- ☐ Other

9. What do you believe are the parents' principal reasons for selecting YCIS as the school for their children? Please use your opinion of parents' motivations to join our school, and rank the reasons below in order, by sequencing the options into first, second, third place etc. Please also remember to stipulate and rank any other reason not listed. 您认为家长选择耀中的主要原因是什么? 请根据您对父母动机的看法, 按第一、第二、第三等顺序排列以下原因, 并记住包含未列出的其他原因。 *

Social/cultural understanding and cohesion 社会/文化理解和凝聚力
Cognitive development 认知发展
Future educational/occupational prospects 未来教育/职业前景
Location of school 学校的位置
Bilingual (English and Mandarin) education 双语教学 (英文和普通话)
Character education 品德教育
Other 其他

10. If you included 'other' in the previous question, please state: 如果您在以上问题中选择'其他', 请说明:

Enter your answer

11. How knowledgeable are you with regard to the most recent research into the cognitive benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism? 您对双语和多语的认知益处的最新研究了解多少? *

- ☐ Very knowledgeable 非常精通
- ☐ Partly knowledgeable 大部分精通
- ☐ Average 平均水平
- ☐ Poor knowledge 少部分精通
- ☐ No knowledge 完全不了解

12. Would you like to be more knowledgeable with regard to recent research into bilingualism and multilingualism? 您想对最近关于双语和多语的研究有更多的了解吗? *

- ☐ Definitely 非常想
- ☐ Possibly 很可能
- ☐ Unsure 不确定
- ☐ Definitely not 坚决不会
- ☐ Not applicable 不适用

13. If you are willing to participate in a voluntary interview about this topic, please leave your email details below: 如果您不介意我联系你参加一个关于这个主题的自愿面试，请在下面留下您的电子邮件地址：

Enter your answer

Submit

Questionnaire and interface for the Marketing/Admissions Department

Bilingualism and Multilingualism survey for marketing/admissions

The survey will take approximately 4 minutes to complete.

These questions will help me as part of my master's research into bilingualism and multilingualism. Please note that this is completely voluntary. The information you provide will remain confidential and you will not be identified in the research paper, however, you may be contacted and invited to participate in a follow-up interview.

这些问题将帮助我作为我的硕士研究生双语和多语能力的一部分。请注意，这是完全自愿的。您提供的信息将保密，研究论文中不会透露您的身份，但是，我们可能会联系您并邀请您参加后续采访。

...

* Required

1. How many years have you worked for YCIS? 您在耀中工作几年了? *

Enter your answer

2. Which term do you feel best fits your own linguistic abilities? 您觉得哪个词最能代表您的语言能力? *

☐ Monolingual 单一语言

☐ Bilingual 双语

☐ Multilingual 多语言

3. If you answered 'bilingual' or 'multilingual', please specify which languages:

如果您答案是双语或者多语言请说明哪些语言:

Enter your answer

4. What languages are spoken at home? (please select all that apply)

您在家庭中讲什么语言? (请选择所有适用选项) *

☐ English 英语

☐ Mandarin 普通话

☐ Cantonese 广东话

☐ French 法语

☐ German 德语

☐ Italian 意大利语

☐ Spanish 西班牙语

☐ Portuguese 葡萄牙语

☐ Japanese 日语

☐ Korean 韩语/朝鲜语

☐ Swedish 瑞典语

☐ Norwegian 挪威语

☐ Afrikaans 南非语

☐ Other

5. How would you rate your own knowledge and understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism?

您将如何评价自己对双语和多语种的了解和理解? *

☐ Excellent 极好

☐ Good 好

☐ Average 一般

☐ Fair 低于一般

☐ Poor 不好

6. In your opinion, what do you see as the greatest advantage of being bilingual or multilingual? 您

认为双语或多语的最大优势是什么? *

☐ Social/cultural understanding and cohesion 社会/文化理解和凝聚力

☐ Cognitive development 认知发展

☐ Future educational/occupational prospects 未来教育/职业前景

☐ Other

7. What do you believe are the parents' principal reasons for selecting YCIS as the school for their children? Please use your opinion of parents' motivations to join our school, and rank the reasons below in order, by sequencing the options into first, second, third place etc. Please also remember to stipulate and rank any other reason not listed. 您认为家长选择耀中的主要原因是什么? 请根据您对父母动机的看法, 按第一、第二、第三等顺序排列以下原因, 并记住包含未列出的其他原因。 *

Social/cultural understanding and cohesion 社会/文化理解和凝聚力

Cognitive development 认知发展

Future educational /occupational prospects 未来教育/职业前景

Location of school 学校的位置

Bilingual (English and Mandarin) education 双语教学 (英文和普通话)

Character education 品德教育

Other 其他

8. If you included 'other' in the previous question, please state: 如果您在以上问题中选择'其他', 请说明:

Enter your answer

9. How knowledgeable are you with regard to the most recent research into the cognitive benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism? 您对双语和多语的认知益处的最新研究了解多少? *

- ☐ Very knowledgeable 非常精通
- ☐ Partly knowledgeable 大部分精通
- ☐ Average 平均水平
- ☐ Poor knowledge 少部分精通
- ☐ No knowledge 完全不了解

10. Would you like to be more knowledgeable with regard to recent research into bilingualism and multilingualism? 您想对最近关于双语和多语的研究有更多的了解吗? *

- ☐ Definitely 非常想
- ☐ Possibly 很可能
- ☐ Unsure 不确定
- ☐ Definitely not 坚决不会
- ☐ Not applicable 不适用

11. If you are willing to participate in a voluntary interview about this topic, please leave your email details below: 如果您不介意我联系你参加一个关于这个主题的自愿面试，请在下面留下您的电子邮件地址：

Enter your answer

Submit

Appendix B

Interview Transcripts

Interviewee A

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

The way I see it, generally, being bilingual or multilingual gives the speaker more resources. Language is basically a tool. Having this tool in your toolbox gives you access to a lot more things, such as interpersonal communication, academic pursuits, job opportunities, etc.

Language is also more than just a tool. It is also a vehicle of culture in the broad sense. Whether you acquire a language or learn it, you are exposed to or immersed in the culture behind it. You get to know another way of looking at the world. And this sometimes could be beneficial.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

Like I said in question one, being bilingual or multilingual gives you access to more resources than being monolingual. Suppose you know more and understand more, this could put you at a cognitive advantage. If I remember correctly, the Broca's area in our brain is in charge of language learning. I suppose a multilingual speaker must have a more developed/active Broca's area. Could this mean that there are more connections between synapses of this area and those of other areas? More neuron connections, more intelligence? Or does scientific research say the opposite? Sorry, I really don't know that much about this field.

3. Have you undertaken any research or studied the advantages of bilingualism/multilingualism?

Sadly, no. Not systematically anyway.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

If members of our community could be backed up with solid science in this area, they would do a lot more professionally. The bilingualism this school has been working so hard to achieve would go so much further.

The Admissions Office, for example, could select some research results, adapt the language, add them to their brochures to make sure the parents know what is on offer.

Interviewee B

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

I think that practically speaking, it just opens up opportunities to have different career paths or options of living in other countries, so I think it is a very practical thing. Friendships or even if you're just 'out and about' and someone is struggling, if you're in a place where you might meet people who speak different languages, you can just 'jump in' and help out, so practically it's very useful. Culturally or socially, I think learning another language helps you to appreciate the culture of that language, it helps you to also respect other people who do have to, for whatever reason, they might be immigrants or live in another country, they have to continuously use another language. I think it makes you really appreciate how hard they have to work.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

I did a presentation on this last semester, there are lots of studies that show cognitively speaking, academically, students that are bilingual or multilingual turn out academically stronger than their peers who have experienced the same systems. There are also a lot of studies that show when you are bilingual/multilingual, you are able to focus, your ability to focus on tasks is greater. There's been a couple of interesting ones, there's one that was about a baby, even when you're an infant, the babies were able to unlock a puzzle figuratively speaking. They were able to 'get it' and the monolingual babies weren't able to get it across the board which I found fascinating.

3. Have you undertaken any research or studied the advantages of bilingualism/multilingualism?

First of all, I did an 'EAL in The Mainstream'. The BML course is something that I've also completed. Other than that, I've done casual research on my own using things such as websites really.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

I think that would make a huge impact. I'm thinking in terms of our teachers, as a teacher you always feel there's a need to do stuff, I've got to do this and this and our leadership is saying I need to do this and this, but I think we are missing the 'why' of everything. If we can really be solid on why we are emphasising these things, I think it would be a little bit more motivating – this is why I'm doing it. For parents as well, I think it would really help them to understand it's not just sending your child to a bilingual school, there's more you've got to do than that. For the Marketing Department, I suppose it would help them to sell our school. This is not just something that's unique in a 'showy way', it's actually better for your child.

Interviewee C

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

If we go to the brain science, it would help with understanding, comprehension. Also when you know at least two languages, it's way easier to learn three or four because you have the basis and I think your brain gets more practice. But with language, you can access culture. You can understand better, the deeper meaning. It helps you to understand the culture and to navigate.

2. You touched upon the brain science of speaking two or more languages. What else do you understand of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

I think it helps with not just learning a language or learning of the words, but developing inferences, developing understanding of the text. Not the surface meaning of the words, the more deeper understanding, which will develop cognitive ability for language and I think it will transfer into reading, writing and more academic work.

3. Have you undertaken any research or studied the advantages of bilingualism/multilingualism?

I think because I'm taking a course right now about reading fluency and how to develop reading strategies. In the past, I've read some articles about being bilingual and how it develops your cognitive abilities but it has been a while.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

I think having the information and knowing what to do is the first step in actually doing it. You need to have that information and when someone tells you 'these are the benefits and this is what you can do' it's straightforward. We know we are a bilingual school. I personally speak two languages and I try to do that at home and try to encourage the kids but it gets lost in life, so I think just being more intentional about talking to them

about bringing resources and having that information, I think it's all about being intentional but for that, it is important to have the information. So I think it will be very helpful.

Interviewee D

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

I really am interested in this topic because I think clearly this has influenced my life. I had the chance to really go through the transition of becoming bilingual and really have some maybe deeper insights into the benefits or the value of being able to speak two languages, especially these two: Chinese and English. First of all, I think the big advantage in my view is that you get a real chance to understand the culture of let's say speaking a country's language. Without a real understanding of a language, you will probably only get a superficial look at the culture. So in terms of the ability to broaden your perspectives and gaining more understanding on different cultures. That would probably be top of my list. Other ones would probably include the ability to facilitate understanding between different people because you speak both languages, you can maybe serve as a translator to help people to get along better. That is still something I think very important in today's world, I think we are farther away from world peace than ever it seems. I think helping people from different cultures and different parts of the world to meet and understand each other is still valuable. Then of course, as you get older, in terms of your career, being bilingual is certainly an advantage. It will open more doors because you speak multiple languages than if you didn't. So I think in terms of career advancement, it's also a valuable asset to have.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

I personally feel that having a broader perspective helps you to become wiser. So when you get a chance to learn something new, I think that does trigger maybe additional mental capacity or development. I do believe in that, I don't have any hard data on if being bilingual has advanced my own let's say capacities but I would lean towards that likely being the case. I think that is a benefit of having different language skills, you get the chance to be exposed to different ideas.

3. Have you studied or undertaken any research or studied the advantages of bilingualism/multilingualism or is it from your own experiences that you have an understanding of this topic?

I think my understanding from my own experiences has shown me that many of us who are in this situation feel I think quite privileged to have such deep insights into both cultures and we of course try to promote the good and help each other understand each other while also recognise the shortcomings of both cultures, so yes it's personal experience.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

One of the key reasons why we chose the school for our kids is the bilingual programme. If our kids can develop with bilingual skills, I will be a super happy parent. I think the school does promote that part of the curriculum and I think that should continue to be a focus. I think your topic is something that I will be interested to hear about. That could maybe enhance how we convince our children to take both languages seriously and make their best efforts.

Interviewee E

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

I think having the ability to learn another language can open your mind. For example, my mother is monolingual, so she does not have access to as many opportunities as bilingual speakers. Language is like a key to another world.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

I think that it helps you to be more open-minded. Like I say, it helps you to learn other ways of doing things so learning other languages makes your brain bigger.

3. Have you undertaken any research or studied bilingualism/multilingualism?

I have attended a course on EAL In The Mainstream, I also attended a short IB course on bilingualism and multilingualism.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

I think it would assure parents that they are doing the right thing. Sometimes they might have concerns that their child's language skills are not as strong in their mother tongue as a child in a monolingual school. But learning more about this topic will let them know that being bilingual has advantages. For teachers, I think it will also help them to get a better understanding about the job and to learn more.

Interviewee F

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

I think people who can speak two or more languages, they are more open-minded because they can think about issues in different ways. Maybe you will think about a problem when he speaks Chinese or thinks in a Chinese way, and when he switches to a different language he might sort things out in a different way. When you learn a new language, you will learn a new way to see the world.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

When I learned about multi-intelligence theory, there was one part called language intelligence. I think people who are capable of speaking two languages or more, their language intelligence is at a higher level than others.

3. How have you come to your understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? Is it through studying or through personal experience?

Due to my own personal experiences in education, I had a bilingual education, I see myself as part Chinese and part western. It does shape me. I do see things sometimes in a western way. I guess that can be an advantage. Also, it does help with your personality. It just makes you more flexible.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

I think we are a bilingual school, but we never really talk about how we can combine the two languages together. Maybe with more information, maybe we can get the teachers working together more and co-teachers more involved during the planning and the right way to get involved to help children learn the languages at the same time.

Interviewee G

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

There are several advantages. Number one, definitely the ease of communication. It allows you to travel more, meet more people, understand more cultures and also gain more knowledge, so you not only read one language but in our case two. So that really helps with absorbing different medias.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

From what little we understand, in our case English and Chinese, because the way in which the language is constructed is fairly different. So, for English it is Latin-based, so you read as you will when you read the English words, but for Chinese is very much pictorial so it goes back to cave writings and so on. So, I think when the kids look at the two different languages, they are essentially using two different parts of their brains. Hopefully, it stimulates different parts of their brains. So that's one particular advantage for these two languages.

3. How have you come to your understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? Is it through studying or through personal experience?

In a way, through being bilingual we kind of realise that it's a little different because when we say something or think something in one language or the other, the expression seems to come from a different place. There are certain things you have in Mandarin that doesn't exist in English so that it kind of forces you to think a little more about how do I express something in one language and in the other language. If this phenomenon doesn't occur in the culture, it doesn't exist technically so sometimes things can be difficult to explain. I think it was probably after having the children that you actually give it more thought: how should you approach teaching your kids two languages so that they don't get mixed up? Then we realised that no, actually it's ok to expose them to different languages as long as they know who they are speaking it to. Even if you are living in a multicultural or

multilingual environment, the kids don't get mixed up, they kind of do it naturally.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

It really depends very much on the purpose why the parent would like the child to speak more than one language. Technically, in just a China environment, or the US or the UK, you don't need a second language. So, either interests or there is a possible need or goal to learn other languages or for certain studies. That kind of effects the level of language for the child. Once you get that sorted out and you have parents who are really into, you know strongly believe that the children should be completely bilingual and not just surface-level bilingual, then you can have a conversation. If they are just happy to say I just want daily conversation or they have enough to buy a meal, this is not really a topic they would be interested to explore. It's something that you should not understand just the surface, you need to understand how to read it, write it, the culture behind it. Then yes, I think it's a great thing.

Interviewee H

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

I think on a personal note, socially, just on the lighter side, it's good for us to be in a situation or in a country where few people speak the language we speak. Even in a public place, we can still share personal thoughts and have personal discussions. Of course, after listening to the languages of the others around us and we have determined that we don't have a language in common. I think that's one of the benefits. It also helps us to sustain our identity or to sustain where we are from. Especially in these days when we are not as in touch with family members as we would like to. So, having that language keeps us grounded or just reminds us where we are from. I guess there are many other benefits either cognitive or metacognitive. On a personal level, I don't think that's what we focus on when we can speak another language. It does help us to create those links with others who are also from our country. It has this unified feeling.

2. You touched upon a little about the cognitive benefits there, could you tell me more about your awareness of this?

I think that, from what I've previously learned and also the BML course that I completed, I think it's important for any child to first develop their home language, I fully agree with that. After that, they can build on that. They can draw from that to build their second or additional language. I think I've read somewhere, students that are able to switch between different languages, usually they are more able to switch between different tasks. That of course then develops your ability to problem-solve or more clearly answer higher-order thinking questions.

3. How have you come to your understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? Is it through studying or through personal experience?

It was part of the modules for my current degree. It is part of my interests at the moment. Where I come from, it was always part of what we had to be aware of and it's good to pick a word here or there from others.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

I think it would be a huge, positive impact. If you explain to them the benefits thereof, and also that it's all about motivation, you have to be motivated. There will need to be a sense of self-motivation: why do you want your child to learn a second language? It's important to share that with them. Not everyone will be able to acquire a language at the same rate. It's important for the child to have an affinity with the language that you want them to learn. Maybe they're not really into English, maybe they want to learn Spanish or Italian. It's also important for the parents I think to realise that you can't learn a new language in isolation. It can't be from 8 in the morning until 3 o'clock in the afternoon and that's it. There should be a bit more for them to do within the language at home or over weekends. I'm not saying they have to have an English tutor after school, so maybe find a swimming coach that can teach a certain skill in another language or an art teacher that is bilingual, who can also teach that skill in another language so that it's not just focused on the academics. More of an immersive experience.

Interviewee I

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

So, speaking two or more languages, you can get around the world a lot easier. Helping other people, for example, they are able to help translate things for others. Like I said, travelling around the world.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

Younger children, I find that they work a lot harder. They do take a bit longer to maybe understand what I'm saying but eventually they get it and they're able to translate it into their own native language which helps them a lot. When they're older I find that it's a lot quicker. So, the adults I know who speak two languages they can translate things very quickly.

3. How have you come to your understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? Is it through studying or through personal experience?

I've never done professional research. I do have friends who speak multiple languages, so I tend to ask them 'what language do you dream in?' or 'when I say something to you, do you translate it back into your own language?' that's really helpful because if they do need processing time, I will be aware of it. So, it is something that I am interested in. I am intrigued by it.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

I think it will give people more knowledge. It will give us more ways to tackle the problems that might occur when we are teaching. It's never going to be negative when sharing more facts on people who speak more languages.

Interviewee J

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

First benefit, I would say is cultural understanding, open-mindedness, more empathy for people who come from outside your comfort zone. So I find that students who are bilingual or multilingual are usually more open to socialising or collaborating with others who are not from their own mother tongue countries. Secondly, I do think it does bring a certain sense of maturity as a consequence. It means they come from some sort of a background where either they have parents that come from different cultures, therefore they're getting more input from different perspectives. Or it means that they've travelled themselves, so they're more mature. They're less afraid and more willing to take risks. Thirdly, I find that those students who are bilingual or multilingual, I'm not saying that they're more intelligent, but they are more able to use different strategies to overcome obstacles in communication or in understanding like comprehending. They have, in my experience, a little more resilience in taking on a task that might seem very difficult but they'll give it a go. Monolinguals are not as quick to negotiate meaning, they tend to maybe shy away from those challenges which is why I think they tend to often stay within monolingual pools.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

I can't say that I'm well-read in the area. But I know that it definitely works for developing your working memory because you have to remember and memorise new words, grammatical structures so I think that works in your favour. Especially for older people. I know, I have read this, if you speak English and Chinese for example. Ok in English you have the alphabet, it's phonetic, you translate the letter and make the word. For Chinese speakers, they have that extra step of having to process the fact that it's a character, so it's not something phonetic that they can simply translate into sound. So that's an extra step in their cognitive processing that has benefits.

3. How have you come to your understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? Is it through studying or through personal experience?

I would say earlier in my career I did a lot more reading. Now I tend to learn a lot more on the job through interacting with students who are bilingual, multilingual, monolingual. I do still read a little bit, but it's mostly in conversation and through experience.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

I think it would have a hugely beneficial impact because we are at an international school so by definition, there's going to be a lot of languages, a lot of cultures that will be trying to co-exist and collaborate together. So by being more aware of the benefits especially, I think it will give people more motivation to work with people outside of their comfort zone: for teachers and for students. I think it will benefit as well, hugely, people that come from historically or geographically places whereby they don't have to learn a second language. For them, they're not always aware of the benefits, because they haven't had to be. I'm speaking mostly of English-speaking countries of course. As an English speaker, you don't have to learn another language. You go to most other countries in the world and they either have to learn English. If you're in Switzerland, they're learning French, German minimum, also English also Italian. So I think in terms of being an international student, travelling globally, interacting with people from around the world, I think it would make it so much easier, way more open. I think it would open up the tight circles we can sometimes see, where monolinguals tend to stick to each other so that will really help with community, mutual respect and understanding. I think you get that through being educated on why you should do that. I think quite often the students don't understand the benefits.

Interviewee K

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

I'd say the top three benefits of speaking multiple languages are one: it helps with your critical thinking because you are able to relate to problems in different ways. I think it helps with flexibility because you are able to switch gears very easily. Then third, I think culturally it really is to your benefit because when you know the idiosyncrasies of a language, then you're able to think about the cultural differences between the people who speak the different languages so you're a bit more open-minded.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

Your brain is a muscle, so you're exercising it. I think by being able to switch between different languages, you're exercising your brain. So people who run a lot are going to have amazing lungs. People who use their brains in different manners are going to be probably a less likely candidate for dementia and all that other kind of stuff because they're using those muscles, it's not sitting dormant.

3. How have you come to your understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? Is it through studying or through personal experience?

I think it's a little bit of both. In the past, I had a lot of English as Additional Language learners, so there were a lot of things that I did. I'm also bilingual. So there were a lot of things that I did before. When I started to teach internationally, I used a lot of those strategies, but I also had to change it because now I was dealing with students where the language, they were using was something I wasn't fluent in so that changed things. So also doing the research, I started one course and ultimately didn't get to finish it, but then also did the BML course as well. I think a lot of the strategies for your bilingual and multilingual students will also benefit most students. It's always going to be a relevant topic that I'm going to research.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

I think it would be super beneficial to teachers because to be able to have strategies and things they can have to use to benefit their students, teachers will be on board for that. I think it will be beneficial to parents because when we have conversations with parents, most of the conversations are to do with 'what are the grades?' but not really thinking about understanding that it's a process. You're not just going to go to a school and have a teacher that speaks English to you for a year and suddenly be fluent in English. There's going to be levels to it. Like maybe they're doing well with academic language but they're not really doing well with social situations. Or they're doing well with writing or reading, but they aren't having the same impact with speaking. I've had lots of conversations with parents where they're just very frustrated about why their child isn't doing this. So to have that background, I think they would be less frustrated and they'd put less pressure on their children.

Interviewee L

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

I think basically it's just expanding your worldview. It's kind of making it so that you're relatable to more people. I believe that you can't really understand the culture without understanding the language. Not only does it help you professionally but also personally, I think it grows you as an individual to know that your language is not necessarily the only language and that we have lots of beautiful people and different points of view and again, you can't know a culture without knowing a language so I think it makes you well-rounded.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

I know that learning another language that's not your mother tongue when you're younger is not only easier but you pick it up a lot quicker, which is why it's important to start those lessons as early as possible. But I'd be interested to know more.

3. How have you come to your understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? Is it through studying or through personal experience?

It's something I've observed working internationally and also in my training in English as a Second Language teacher. Really that's about acquisition, so it's not really about fundamentally learning a new language and getting to the point of being truly bilingual, I haven't really done much research on that. It's been more about the acquisition of a new language and how to teach a language to a student whose mother tongue is not English.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

I think it would help parents to have a deeper appreciation for bilingualism. I think oftentimes it's 'oh I'm going to send my child to this particular school so they can learn Chinese or so they can learn a different language' but I think it's more than that. It's more than just conversational. It's about what are the long-term benefits for their child. I think for staff as well, it would encourage them too so that they can appreciate and be one with a culture and fully vested in the place that they're in.

Interviewee M

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

I think that language opens up a world like access to a world. Because let's say German for example. I don't speak German, so I have no idea what goes on inside the German-language world. Music, movies, news you know all that kind of stuff that I would be able to understand if I understood German. So when you understand a language, it opens up an entire world to you. So speaking more than one language gives you access to that information, that entertainment, the culture, the people. I also believe that language is closely tied to culture. So when you fluently speak and understand a language, you also have a better understanding of the culture itself. Which helps you understand the people of that culture. So if you are bilingual, that gives you a greater understanding of the world and better connections with people. It also gives you more opportunities in your life: if you want to get a job or travel somewhere or you need to translate. Or university scholarships or grants and things like that are more accessible to people who speak more than one language. There are so many benefits. Simply being able to communicate. I could either struggle with using my phone to translate or as a bilingual I can go very easily from one place to another. I think translating is another huge thing. As an educator, if I have students who speak the languages that I feel comfortable in, I feel that I can make a better connection with them.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

My grandmother had dementia. My mum had been doing a lot of research on dementia and Alzheimer's and all that stuff. She and my cousin were taking care of my grandma. I learned from them that there are a lot of ways to try to prevent dementia. Learning more than one language is something that helps to keep your brain sharp. For whatever reason, I don't really understand how but it does. For kids growing up, obviously, the brain can learn a lot very fast at a young age and we slow down as we get older. So learning a language from a young age is really the best time to do it.

3. How have you come to your understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? Is it through studying or through personal experience?

As far as personal research goes, I mean I've done a little research just because of my education degree and it was a requirement from an educator's standpoint. As far as data and studies, I am not as familiar. Personally, I grew up in a multilingual environment, so I grew up with different cultures in the house and I grew up thinking that's normal. I've always been drawn to the idea of multiculturalism and multilingualism. I think I've developed a much better understanding of this whole topic since living in China because back home it was my country, my language, my culture that was the majority and now I'm the minority and I understand where I fit into all of this and how important it is in a school like ours. And in like friend groups where people come from different places and speak different languages, how we need to relate to each other and how we need to be considerate in the way we communicate with each other.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

Realistically I think we don't do enough for our kids. We don't have the amount of support that we should. So to give an information session on what we could be doing and what we should be doing and what would be most beneficial, then we'd have to back it up and start to implement those things. I think it's absolutely essential that we do. If we want our kids to be successful. If they don't have language support then some are going to fail and it's not their fault. If we had those things in place and those strategies and the support system and the programmes in place and getting more information about this topic, then it would be incredible. Well, staff needs to be educated, to be honest, we have so many international teachers that may or may not understand or be on the same page about what this is all about, the importance of bilingualism. If we are on the same page and we have the same goals, we can work together to make it happen. Ideally, this should happen. It would be a big benefit to our kids.

Interviewee N

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

I think there are benefits in terms of just brain function, especially when those languages have been developed as a child. The ability to switch to and from between I think is the thing that helps to develop your brain better than if you only speak in one language. When you take it beyond that into the cultural side of things, you'd rarely learn language in just a language vacuum, there's often culture involved as well so you get to learn the culture as part of that. Beyond that is the ability to travel, work, study and it just opens up possibilities in lots of different places.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

So one of the reasons that I focused on cognitive first, was because my grandad when he stopped working when he was in his sixties, decided he really wanted to try and learn Italian. He would go to Italy for holidays and he decided I'm going to use some of this time to learn Italian. He found it extremely difficult, he didn't go to any actual classes, it was all self-teaching methods and stuff like that which I think is probably why it didn't go so well, kind of listening to tapes and reading things. But he said it helped his brain 'on' is how he put it. At the same time, he was also trying to learn piano and he had lessons for that. Basically for him, it was now that I've stopped working, I want to keep my brain on. We would say 'keep your brain active' my grandad said 'I want to keep it on, I just want to keep it functioning'. So he spent a lot of time and effort making sure he was doing things, he went to night classes on local history and all that kind of stuff. But the language side of it, he got to the point where he could play a few tunes on the piano, he enjoyed going to the night classes on history, but Italian just completely eluded him. Like being able to learn a language, he couldn't learn it at that stage but I don't doubt that the effort that he put into learning it was really helpful in terms of his brain function, I don't doubt that was there.

3. How have you come to your understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? Is it through studying or through personal experience?

I'm studying at the moment and one of the things that I focused in on was and did a case study of, was the language interventions that we have in the school that we teach in. So, I did quite a lot of reading about language interventions. I was not able to find a lot of material that was specific to our context in China. A lot of it was very US-centric and it focused on English and Spanish. So yeah, there's a little bit of research in terms of the benefits and the difficulties in providing and developing a learning community in which you can make all of that happen at once, because there are so many things that we have and have to focus on and so many targets that we have, if, because we are a bilingual school, if bilingualism was more of a focus, I think it would be much easier because we have to focus on attaining so many things and reaching so many standards. I think in amongst that one of the things that gets lost for some kids is acquisition of Chinese, or the 'keeping up' of the Chinese if they're a Chinese speaker, particularly in secondary school. I do often wonder, I'm like 'I wonder if your parents speak in English or Chinese at home? I wonder if you go home at Chinese New Year and you see grandparents and struggle to have a conversation with them.' I would never ask them I worry it would be offensive, but I am interested. I think we actually focus far more on English, we say we are a bilingual school but we are not. We are an English-speaking school that teaches Chinese, more than some schools teach Chinese. And our Chinese-speaking students who struggle with English, I don't think get enough support to bring that up until they get to secondary, but not middle. I think they get the support in primary, I think they get the support in high school, but in middle school, it's lacking. Instead of it being language sets, it's set by language, but in a lot of subjects, it turns into ability sets. So what actually happens, in terms of cognition, the lower-level work is given to the kids who have the least amount of English. But actually, if they were supported in development of the English through the task, they could potentially do higher-level work if they were supported in terms of the language aspect. Generally speaking, in middle school, because their teachers don't speak Chinese, so their teachers aren't able to communicate to them ideas in Chinese, so they can understand them. That's the main transition between primary and secondary: there is language support, but it's not in the same way as the co-teaching model.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

Based on a few observations and what I think, a lot of our students are Chinese. What I think is, a lot of parents of our students are sending them to our school in order to learn English. That's the focus: learn English. I think if we were able to communicate to them and reframe to them that it's not only important to learn English, but that they also continue to learn and enjoy things like Chinese literature and Chinese folklore and stories and culture and all of that stuff in order that they are able to a) interact when they are with their family and b) just so that they are able to understand their culture.

I find it very important as someone who is not living in the country that they're from, that I have this love and understanding of the culture from which I came. I worry that for our kids because most of them are probably going on to universities that are outside of China. They are going to go on as a Third Culture Kid, where they don't have an idea of where they come from and they don't have a basis in that. The cultural side of it, even more than the cognitive and language side of it is extremely important. I think for our parents, it would be really interesting for them to hear about the benefits of dual and multilingualistic thing if the way it was presented to them was with scientific research, I think they would absolutely be interested in that.

Interviewee O

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

I think it's mostly how social they can be. Having this ability, it just means that they are never outsiders, or they can be more independent wherever they go in our world. For my children with Chinese, it's important for them to be independent. I don't need it to be academics, but they need to be able to read a contract, go to the bank and sort a problem. If they receive a message from their compound, they know what it means without using their telephone translator, which are all these things which I've struggled with. I think the days when I am most furious at China have to do with language, so I don't want this to happen to them. Of course, they don't realise how lucky they are at how easy it can come to them.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

I think it's actually from a personality point of view. Of course, there's a lot of mental gymnastics, but again I think the most important aspect is the social aspect. It creates more empathy, they are willing to understand how to think in a different way when someone else says something. Cognitive? I'm not so sure.

3. How have you come to your understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? Is it through studying or through personal experience?

I read a lot before having our first child because I was very worried. I was worried it would be too many languages. I don't remember the authors, but there's an American lady who wrote twice about the Chinese American experience and about how they could learn the language but not the cultural content of the language. So although the daughters came back to China later, the daughters spoke fluent Chinese in the States but when coming back to China, they couldn't really understand all of the meaning of what was being told to them, because they didn't have all of the references. I had a friend who grew up in Macau, the teaching was all in Portuguese, but not all the references to Portugal were there. The colloquial speaking and slang was not there so she did not understand everything. Then she

would say something that was sort of Chinese. I read a bit before my first child, then life gets in the way, and he was really good at it, so we tried to stick to one parent one language, it gets harder, a lot harder since they started primary school. Especially since the language at school is English. We would have preferred for them to go to a school that has a more Chinese environment, to be honest, just so that they would feel forced to be in a Chinese environment. Because sometimes they speak English to each other. Now if we are all together, we speak in English which we didn't before. It just slowly creeps in. I did some online research for this, to see how other families have dealt with this.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

I think as a parent, you really, it's not something that you do very lighthearted. Maybe you think yes, your child will be able to do these social interactions, but you also think it's too much. So as a parent, you want some sort of reassurance and perhaps some guidance on how to do it well. It would be reassurance, that would help, reassurance that we're doing the right thing. Yes, I'm not destroying my child's brain, science and research are on my side, we're doing the right thing. I actually think it would be very good if the kids could also attend an information session. Maybe not the young ones, but maybe primary school children could maybe take something out of it. I think it's something for them, they can start to understand that it's a gift. Something really special that they have.

Interviewee P

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

I guess for myself, sometimes there's ways of expressing things that can only be done in one language or the other. So you know you kind of capture the essence of something you want to express with one particular phrase or word. I think there's also a chance to understand other people, see different people's perspectives. Even something as simple as how to measure things. You know, my kids they get confused but they recognise that there's different ways that people from different parts of the world use to measure things. So something like that, it helps to really see that people are not the same and to embrace and accept the difference of people who are different to you.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

I don't know these, only from experience, I've never studied this. I'm not familiar with that.

3. How have you come to your understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? Is it through studying or through personal experience?

It's mostly from the perspective of a parent and thinking about how to approach multiple languages with my kids. I think I just read that if you are speaking two languages at home, then speech may be delayed for your child, but it's nothing to worry about, it's just that they're trying to process multiple sounds and words. Nothing more advanced than that, just from a parenting viewpoint.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

I would be interested in that. I don't want to call them mistakes but there are things I would have maybe done a bit differently had I known. One example would be, for my daughter, I don't speak Chinese with my partner at home. Early on I knew I wanted my daughter to learn Chinese but we didn't speak it at home and she went to an English-speaking daycare and that was fine. But I noticed once we moved to Beijing and comparing that with her younger brother who kind of grew up in Beijing. Her tones, her ability to speak the tones properly has never been as accurate as her younger brother. I wondered and I thought I remember reading that when they're babies, even if they're not speaking yet, they're hearing all of the different tones. So I probably would have benefited from speaking to her, letting her hear the different sounds when she was younger. I would jump at the chance to learn more. I have a lot of friends, they're in Beijing only for a few years and they want to learn Chinese as quickly as they can. But they're worried that when their children leave, they will lose what they've learned. I think a lot of them are looking for ways to continue that Chinese progress or not forget it once they leave China. I don't know what the research says for that, but I think a lot of people are really quite worried that once they are not speaking it, once they are not exposed to it anymore, then they'll lose it. People always say if you learn it as a kid then you don't forget it, but then at what age do you start forgetting or can you still retain it? I think for families here that I know, they want their kids to retain Mandarin for as long as they can.

Interviewee Q

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

I think a cultural understanding is a big deal. Because you can study a different culture, but once you are in the process of learning a different language, even the way sentences are structured as you speak a different language, you get to know more about that culture and what's important. Even traditions come into play with languages and so I think while you're becoming bilingual, you're also getting a better cultural understanding. I think it just opens your mind to more, there's more than just one way to communicate and you learn new ways of communicating and solving problems. I think being bilingual helps you solve problems better too because you've had to learn other ways to say something or other ways to solve a problem. The big one for me in choosing a bilingual education is that it sets her up for the future. Because if two people with identical degrees let's say are going for a job and one is bilingual, although it might not be a company where being bilingual is necessary, but you realise it gives you a step advantage, you could participate if that language is needed and shows that you also have that open-mindedness that being bilingual brings.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

Personally, I don't know a lot about that, except I've read the research that shows children who have learned multiple languages do tend to be better problem solvers. I don't know if it opens up a certain side of the brain where they're critically thinking and trying to understand something else. But even as older adults, I think you take in more when listening. So, if you are in a situation where a problem needs to be solved or like conflict resolution, you have the ability to listen before responding because if you have different languages coming at you all the time, it gives you that ability to take it in. I don't know about the actual neurological responses to that though.

3. How have you come to your understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? Is it through studying or through personal experience?

Originally as a parent, I researched. I had always loved languages and wanted my daughter to speak a different language. In the times of doing tours of different schools and hearing different principals talking about the benefits of bilingualism and teaching other languages, that's when I started to hear about how their artistic side gets developed, this side of the brain, and then as well as the problem solving and also the child as a whole gets developed. Once I heard the principals say that, I did research into that to make sure which type of school to put our daughter in. There were STEM schools and bilingual schools, so we wanted to research. She went to a bilingual school, a pure immersion school.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

I think a lot of people don't understand the difference between multiculturalism, bilingualism, multilingualism, language immersion. Because there are so many different levels so I don't think that people understand exactly what YCIS is – are we a bilingual school? Are we a truly bilingual school? I do like the idea of getting people to understand. I have a problem as a parent of an English speaker because I feel like there is not enough Chinese. If it was a true bilingual school, my child would be getting more input in Chinese across the subjects. But the majority of the parents are there for the kids to learn English, and so the majority of the teaching is in English. So then these native English speakers have developed this culture where they listen to the instructions in English and don't listen to the co-teacher speak Chinese. So if the Chinese was also forced, so that's all they hear and the English is there to support when needed, then I think the Chinese language will develop further. First of all, understanding really what our school is, or what it's about is important. The co-teaching thing is really unique, it should be a dual immersion. In ECE it works fine, they're immersed in the languages all day long. That's ideal, it works at that age. For somebody who starts in Year 3, it's not quite that bilingual or balanced.

Interviewee R

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

I think there are many, like you know we grew up in a bilingual environment. For me, that's normal...Then I found out...like no, people don't necessarily speak a second language. It was like helpful. It's like a switch in my mind. There is no thinking, I don't what in the brain, but it's like a switch from one to another. I think that it helps, I don't if there's science that can prove it but it helps for everything in studying, like it makes it maybe easier, because you are more flexible. There's this flexibility from switching from one thing to another without thinking about it. Even for my kids, for them it's like, that's the normality of it. I don't know if speaking many languages will affect their math or science. Enrich in like, being able to go to any environment and you can talk. So it's the fact of being like multicultural, it's opened them to different cultures. I think for the future, that's good.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

I can just tell between younger people and older people, from my own experience...my learning curve of learning Chinese was much slower. My children learn much more quickly and also they have less shame. We think a lot as adults, an adult will feel a bit restrained. I know there are many researches about how bilingualism is affecting the brain, but to be frank, I never read it.

3. How have you come to your understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? Is it through studying or through personal experience?

For us, it came as a matter of fact. We grew up as bilingual. For me, it came as a natural thing because we grew up like this. For us, learning another language is a reality. We didn't do any research or something. Now with the kids, I'm more like interested in the topic.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

It depends how you present the information. It depends on the motivation of the parents. Every parent will be happy to know how it's affecting the brain and development. If it has any influence to their math learning, that will be a big hit. For foreign parents, it's the culture aspect. It opens eyes to a new culture. That's something that's important. I see it for my kids, the way they behave or they react, it's different to a child who lives in China but doesn't speak Chinese. So it opens the way or the interpretation of things. If you don't speak a language or understand the culture, it's like you're behind a wall. So it's to say that, it helps brain development, it helps for the future if you speak multiple languages, you will be more considerate of others, but it also opens you to a culture of where you live or if you go back to your own home country, you will have a better understanding. At least, it gives you this open-mindedness. There's what you see, what you read and what you have went through, with personal experience.

Interviewee S

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

I think that a big advantage is that it helps with your ability to converse and communicate with more people. Being bilingual will help you to understand more nuances and have a richer understanding of words. So knowing more language gives you more access to cultures which will have advantages in the future in terms of education and jobs.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

I think it can help with problem-solving. It keeps you on your toes. If you are a bilingual, you are more able to compare meanings and have a richer understanding of a topic.

3. How have you come to your understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? Is it through studying or through personal experience?

My knowledge on bilingualism and multilingualism mainly comes from my own experiences. I grew up in a multilingual environment. It was when I became a parent that I started to do some research into bilingualism. I did have some apprehension or fear about raising a bilingual or multilingual kid. You want to know that it's going to be ok. One thing that I felt is important is that the child should have one language they can "feel" in, or a "feeling" language. If they cannot express themselves or have one language to process their feelings, I think that's when there can be some problems.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

I think that it will be good for parents to know about the data since we are a bilingual school. We have seen recently from shifting online due to the pandemic that communicating is more important than before. I think if parents get a better understanding of bilingualism, they will see the importance of ensuring a solid foundation of their first language in order to benefit from the advantages of being bilingual.

Interviewee T

1. In your opinion, please explain what you believe to be the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

I think there are many advantages. Firstly, it means that you are able to converse and communicate to a wider group of people. It gives you a better understanding and insight into different cultures. Then it also helps with an appreciation of diversity. I also think that language and linguistic skills give more opportunities with careers and travelling. It's a joy and blessing to immerse into more than just one language and culture – when you can easily switch between languages and cultures; clearly being understood and easier to communicate.

2. What is your understanding of the cognitive benefits of being bilingual or multilingual?

Well, I think that if you have knowledge of two languages, it helps to stimulate the brain. It can develop empathy for others and that can support a better social awareness. I believe that it matures language development, and it keeps the brain active by building up memory with vocabulary and word banks. I think being bilingual encourages thinking, connection, feeling and association amongst different languages and language contexts.

3. How have you come to your understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? Is it through studying or through personal experience?

Through growing up with my background, listening to my parents in one language and going to school and socialising in another language. I think this is a bilingual experience. I feel very fortunate to grow up like this. I can converse and understand one language and switch to another. I consider myself very lucky to have two languages and could understand and communicate in different contexts. I look back and wish my parents had also taught me how to read and write. It's an advantage and joy at the same time for both people to be able to communicate and understand each other. I am always amazed by people I meet who speak multiple languages.

4. If provided with research and information on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, how do you think different members of our community could use the data?

I think, if information in this field was shared with teachers, then they could use the data to inform them in planning and tailoring their lessons to meet a wider range of students, I think it would make teachers consider the language or languages in the classroom and maybe think about how best to adopt a bilingual approach. Getting more information about bilingualism will help to inform parents and enhance the partnership and relationship with students.

Appendix C

Presentation of results to staff

The Why of Bilingualism



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The Why of Bilingualism

- Recent research into the benefits (including cognitive advantages) of bilingualism
- Research into bilingual education and how this impacts us



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Personal research

To what extent do members of our community (YCIS Beijing) understand the benefits of being bilingual/multilingual, in particular with regard to the cognitive advantages?

Survey & interviews

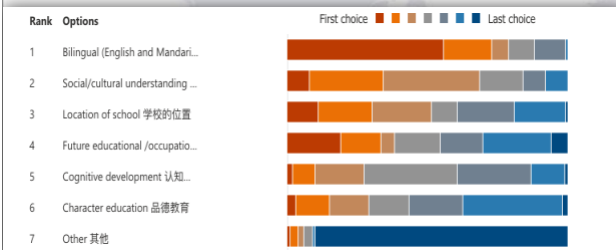


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In total, 99 responses from parents

This question required parents to rank their reasons for selecting YCIS

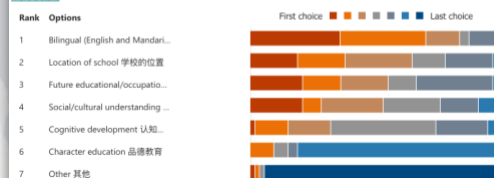
Responses from parents:



Responses from staff:

What do you believe are the parents' principal reasons for selecting YCIS as the school for their children? Please use your opinion of parents' motivations to join our school, and rank the reasons below in order, by sequencing the options into first, second, third place etc. Please also remember to stipulate and rank any other reason not listed. 您认为家长选择耀中的主要原因是什么? 请根据您的对父母动机的看法, 按第一、第二、第三等顺序排列以下原因, 并记住包含未列出的其他原因。

[More Details](#)

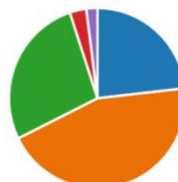


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7. How would you rate your own knowledge and understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? 您将如何评价自己对双语和多语种的了解和理解?

[More Details](#)

Excellent 极好	23
Good 好	44
Average 一般	27
Fair 低于一般	3
Poor 不好	2



8. How knowledgeable are you with regard to the most recent research into the cognitive benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism? 您对双语和多语的认知益处的最新研究了解多少?

[More Details](#)

Very knowledgeable 非常精通	2
Partly knowledgeable 大部分...	33
Average 平均水平	44
Poor knowledge 少部分精通	14
No knowledge 完全不了解	6



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9. Would you like to be more knowledgeable with regard to recent research into bilingualism and multilingualism? 您是否希望对最近关于双语和多语的研究有更多的了解?

[More Details](#)

Definitely yes 非常希望	59
Possibly 很可能会	28
Unsure 不确定	12
Definitely not 肯定不会	0
Not applicable 不适用	0



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In total, 56 responses from staff.

7. How would you rate your own knowledge and understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism? 您将如何评价自己对双语和多语种的了解和理解?

[More Details](#)

Excellent 极好	3
Good 好	23
Average 一般	21
Fair 低于一般	6
Poor 不好	0



8. In your opinion, what do you see as the greatest advantage of being bilingual or multilingual? 您认为双语或多语的最大优势是什么?

[More Details](#)

Social/cultural understanding ...	32
Cognitive development 认知...	11
Future education/occupation ...	9
Other	1



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11. How knowledgeable are you with regard to the most recent research into the cognitive benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism? 您对双语和多语的认知益处的最新研究了解多少?

[More Details](#)

Very knowledgeable 非常精通	1
Partly knowledgeable 大部分...	9
Average 平均水平	27
Poor knowledge 少部分精通	14
No knowledge 完全不了解	2



12. Would you like to be more knowledgeable with regard to recent research into bilingualism and multilingualism? 您想对最近关于双语和多语的研究有更多的了解吗?

[More Details](#)

Definitely 非常想	24
Possibly 很可能	25
Unsure 不确定	4
Definitely not 坚决不会	0
Not applicable 不适用	0



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Interviews

1. What do you see to be the benefits of speaking two or more languages?
2. What do you know about the cognitive advantages of being bilingual/multilingual?
3. What is your experience of gaining knowledge on this topic? (research, personal experience etc.)
4. If there was an information session on the benefits of bilingualism, how might that have an impact on our community?



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Parent interview responses

Parents can identify social/cultural benefits of being bilingual and the impact this may have on future education/job prospects.

Some parents discussed problem solving/multi-tasking as an advantage.

Research about other cognitive benefits was not known by parents interviewed.

Parents were happy at the prospect of receiving further information - it could help with motivation.

Some parents raised questions about effectiveness the co-teaching model and the changes of bilingual teaching in lower secondary.



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Staff interview responses

Staff are aware of cultural/social benefits. Some responses included bilingual individuals' increased ability to multitask and problem solve. There was less knowledge about other research into cognitive advantages.

Teachers are happy to receive more information on this topic.

Concerns on how best to support students who speak neither English or Chinese and how to help secondary students if there is not a Chinese speaking member of staff to help.



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What are the cognitive benefits?

In addition to developing problem-solving skills:

- Research has demonstrated that older bilinguals fare better than monolingual peers in preserving memory
(Bialystok, Craik et al., 2014; Schroeder & Marian, 2012)
- Delays signs of dementia and onset of symptoms of Alzheimer disease for up to 4 years.

(Bialystok, Craik & Luk, 2012; Bialystok, Poarch, Luo & Craik, 2014; Craik Bialystok & Freedman, 2010)

- Reduces the severity of poststroke aphasia

(Paplikar et al., 2018)



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Research into bilingual teaching models

- ☐ Highlights the importance on development of LI.
- ☐ Methods with a higher yield of bilingualism and biliteracy are immersion, maintenance/heritage language and dual language education.



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Impact on our co-teaching model

65-70% of our student cohort are Chinese first language.



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Impact on our co-teaching model

- Focus on key vocabulary in supporting shift from BICS to CALP
- A greater push for one language stations/activities



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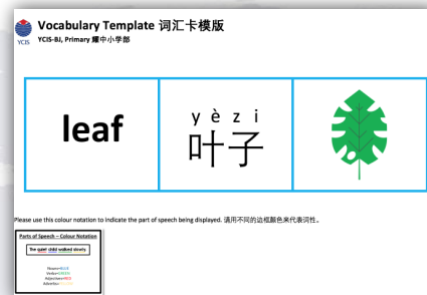
What might this look like?

"Forces"

What are the effects of different forces
on our world?

“力”

不同种类的力分别有什么影响？



Begin with a big focus on vocabulary, shared with parents and specifically taught at the start of the unit.



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What might this look like?

Group A to complete a mini gravity investigation in Chinese, Group B will partake in friction tests in English, Group C will learn test magnets on different materials in Chinese, Group D will learn about air resistance in English.

Later in the week, Group A students who did a gravity investigation in Chinese will complete another activity (practical or written) about gravity in English.



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In Literacy this week, students will be exploring poetry. We will be looking at some examples of poetry and also thinking about the different features and poetic devices that enhance the poems. We would like to encourage students to bring in an example of a poem that they like. It could be a poem in a language other than English. Some students may wish to write their own example of poetry.

For some examples of poems and more information about poetry, you can visit:

在本周的英文写作课上，学生将探索诗歌。我们将看一些诗歌的例子，并思考诗歌的不同特点和诗歌表现手段。我们希望鼓励学生带来一首他们喜欢的诗的例子。它可以是一首用英语或英语以外的语言写的诗。有些学生可能希望自己创作不同的诗歌体裁。

关于一些诗歌的例子和有关诗歌的更多信息，你可以访问：

<https://www.kidzone.ws/poetry/index.htm>
<https://www.poetry4kids.com/poems/>

Communication with
parents is key.

Parents will also be
offered a workshop on
bilingualism to highlight the
importance of developing
students' L1 and finding
opportunities to use L2
outside of school.



Year 5 Learning Community 五年级学习社区
What Are We Learning? (Week 4) 我们在学什么呢？(第四周)

It may be a shorter week in school; however, the students will still have a busy and fun week of learning!
这可能是学校里较短的一周，然而，学生们的周会有一个繁忙而有趣的学习周！

Maths 数学课

In Mathematics, we will be building on our ability to solve problems that involve negative numbers.

Students will be finding differences between negative and positive numbers and considering when we may encounter negative values in real life situations. We will also be asking students to apply their addition and subtraction skills.

在数学课上，我们将提高解决涉及负数问题的能力。学生将找出负数和正数之间的差异，并考虑在现实生活中可能遇到的负值。我们还将要求学生应用他们的加法和减法技能。

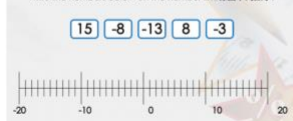
Maths Vocabulary 数学词汇

Integer, positive, negative, minus, difference, compare, addition, add, plus, more, total, sum, take away, subtract, less.

整数，正数，负数，减数，比较，加法，加号，更多，总数，总和，拿走，减去，少。

Here are examples of some activities the students will undertake:
以下是学生将开展的一些活动的例子。

Write the numbers below on the number line 标出下列数字。



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An explanation of celebrating the multilingual students by having poetry in the languages of the students.

How to support language learning?

Visual, practical
 Relatable/Meaningful
 Key words/sentence frameworks displayed
 Teach students techniques to help themselves

Appendix D

Certification given following a presentation to the school foundation.



CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION



Presented to

Michael Cole

as

Presenter

in the e-conference

2021-22 YCYW Teachers' Professional Development Webinar

Paper title

Supporting Our Bilingual Learners

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Lui", positioned above a horizontal line.

Dr. Troy Lui
Chief Education Officer

Certificate No. PS401
Event: 25-26 February 2022