

Does growing up bilingual make it harder or easier to learn English? Parents' perceptions in the UK

- HPEN7025 – Thesis Proposal
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Background & Context

- Many children in the UK grow up with **more than one language** at home
- Parents often worry: “*Will two languages confuse my child or delay English?*”
- Research on bilingualism → many **benefits**, but also notes **possible challenges** (mixing, slower vocabulary) Crisfield’s book shows parents need **practical guidance** based on research

Key SLA Factors

- **Age** – younger vs older learners
- **Amount & quality of input** (Krashen's comprehensible input)
- **Motivation & attitudes** towards English and home language
- **Home language support & family practices**
- **Translanguaging / code-switching** in families

Problem Statement & Research Gap

- Classic question: “Is bilingualism helpful or harmful for English?”
- Large body of research on **bilingual children’s skills** (tests, vocabulary, etc.)
- Fewer studies on **UK parents’ beliefs and everyday decisions** about English vs home language
- Need to understand **how perceptions shape language practices** at home

Aim and research questions

- To explore how bilingual parents in the UK perceive the impact of bilingualism on their children's English learning, and how these beliefs shape family language practices.

Methodology: design, participants & data

- I will use a **mixed-methods design**:
- an **online questionnaire** to get general patterns in parents' beliefs and practices;
- and **semi-structured interviews** with a smaller number of parents to explore their experiences in more depth.

Data analysis

- Descriptive statistics for questionnaire items.
- Thematic analysis for interviews.

Ethics & work plan

- University ethics approval.
- Informed consent; voluntary participation; right to withdraw.
- Anonymity via pseudonyms; secure data storage; deletion after project.
- Sensitivity to parenting choices; option to share evidence-based resources on bilingualism.
- Jan–Feb: literature review; design instruments; ethics application.
- Mar: pilot and revise questionnaire/interview guide.
- Apr–May: questionnaire distribution; initial analysis.
- May–Jun: interviews; transcription.
- Jun–Jul: analysis and writing.
- Aug: revision with supervisor feedback and final submission.

Contribution & closing

- Helps answer a **common question** from parents and teachers:
“Is bilingualism making English harder or easier?”
- Connects **SLA theory** (input, motivation, home language support, translanguaging) with real family experiences
- Offers insights for:
 - TESOL teachers advising bilingual families
 - School policy on home-language use
 - Future outreach resources (e.g. parent leaflets / workshops)
 - Builds your skills as a **practitioner-researcher** in TESOL (Burns)

References

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