

HPEN7006 (SLA): Assignment 1

Factors in Raising a Bilingual Child Based on Collin Baker

By Wei Zhang

Words: 2627

A. What are the most important factors in raising a bilingual child?

It is common practise in today's globalised culture to introduce infants to multiple languages soon after birth or throughout the early stages of infancy, resulting in a large number of bilingual and multilingual adults. What are the most crucial aspects of fostering a child's bilingual development? According to Baker (2014), creating a good and engaging environment for language learning is crucial when aiming to raise a bilingual kid. In my opinion, external and internal variables are required to develop a bilingual atmosphere.

Bilingualism actually occurs inside a regional, national and cultural environment, thus the family is accompanied by aspirations, obligations, and politics (Baker and Wright, 2001). The following will discuss in detail on external and internal factors including family language policy, age, attitudes and motivation, and metalinguistic awareness.

Family Language Policy

Some researchers believe that the circumstances in which a child is raised have a significant impact on the linguistic skills they acquire later in life, and this makes it particularly relevant to consider throughout the context of bilingualism (Genesee, 2007; Montrul, 2008; Grüter and Paradis, 2014). Children who grow up in multilingual families receive less stimulus in any single language than their peers who are nurtured only in one language (Paradis and Genesee, 1996). Inadequate balance in bilingual input leads to uneven growth in both languages (Bernardini and Schlyter, 2004; Baker and Wright, 2001). As a result, the language strategy of families with bilingual children has a significant impact on the amount of each language that their

children are exposed to. The strategy known as "one parent, one language" (OPOL) is widely acknowledged to be a very promising strategy. Quay and Chevalier (2019) summarised the three circumstances in which OPOL applies to families with two or more languages: First, each of the parents' mother tongues is a communal language or dominant language, and both parents use their own language to communicate with their children; second, the parents have distinct native languages, none of which is the community's dominant language, and each parent communicates with their children using their own minor language; and third, both parents' native language is a minority language. Third, one parent chooses to use the majority language to the child regardless of whether both people talk the minority language.

Nonetheless, choosing a family language may have implications for children's linguistic, cultural, and gendered self-concepts. Children's agency and language usage habits may have an effect on how their parents speak. As a result, the family's linguistic preferences will change depending on the society in which they live (Baker and Wright, 2001). For example, based on my observation, a bilingual Chinese - English family is much more likely to speak Mandarin at home in China, but English at home in the United Kingdom.

Age

The association between age while acquiring a second language and linguistic ability is a widely discussed topic in the field of SLA. The controversy is over the existence of a "critical period" in language acquisition. The "critical period hypothesis" states that, without the influence of external influences, people are far more inclined to learn a language during a particular time period.. There has been a seemingly infinite flow of study on the CPH throughout the years, with a wide range of findings. Nonetheless, certain similarities are starting to emerge based on study. To begin with, there is little doubt that adults studying a second language have an early edge, particularly in the area of grammar. However, children will overtake adults as language learners as their exposure to the target language increases. This issue is especially prevalent in situations of natural language acquisition whenever the learner

is not introduced to a great deal of the target language in a classroom setting (Birdsong, 2006; Singleton and Ryan, 2004). Second, only young children are capable of developing a neutral native accent in a natural environment. Formerly thought to be about age 6, Scovel (2000) disproved that the years leading up to puberty are optimal for learning a second language. Singleton and Muñoz (2011) noted that children may learn target language accents on the assumption of considerable exposure to the second language, but other children still cannot acquire target language accents since they continue to actively utilise their mother tongue. Ellis (2008) have hypothesised that with the right instruction, adult learners may develop native-like pronunciation of the target language. Finally, acquiring the grammatical rules of a foreign language is easier for children, but this benefit doesn't become noticeable until around the age of 15 at the earliest. The structural precision of adult learners' speech and writing is closer to that of native speakers, and their grammatical competence is more multifaceted. Pronunciation learning is age-dependent, although grammatical knowledge is acquired independently of age (Baker, 2014). In China, parents desire to raise bi/multilingual children, but English as a language of communication has not yet penetrated the household. Parents depend more on external influences to assist their children learn English. And, many Chinese parents acknowledge the significance of English, but see it more as a subject for the score than as a language for daily conversation.

To sum up, no definitive evidence has been shown to support the existence of the key phase of second language learning. The beginning and end periods of any hypothetical crucial era remain unknown.

Attitudes and Motivation

The importance of emotional elements on learning will progressively rise with age and the development of SLA learners' analysis skills; among these emotional factors, motivation is one of the most significant ones. According to the work of Gardner and Lambert, there are two distinct types of learning motivation: instrumental motivation and integrative motivation (1972). Instrumental motivation is influenced

by outside forces, and language acquisition is a “helpless” decision that focuses on Learning a foreign language has actual value and benefits (Lambert, 1974). Integrative motivation is the “sincere” desire to learn a language on the part of the learner. A true personal interest in the language’s culture and people (Lambert, 1974). These two motivations, with their distinct characteristics, have served as a jumping-off point for research into the historical development of the need to acquire a second or third language. Dornyei (2019) claims that the “ideal self-concept,” rather than the necessity for integration with a particular reference group, might explain integrative motivation. Baker and Wright posed the question, with whom does the language learner seek to integrate, in relation to integrative motivation, especially in the global English-speaking community (2001). Therefore, Dornyei (2020) suggested that future research should concentrate on unconscious motivation, long-term motivation, and perseverance.

I also found that few empirical research have related SLA motivation to the development of implicit knowledge.

Intelligence

The belief that multilingual children would be less intelligent is a misconception that has persisted in the literature on the topic for more than a century. Bilingual youngsters were compared to their monolingual peers on IQ tests in some of the early studies of the phenomenon. Baker (2014) objected that the very first studies were inadequate. Most IQ tests for bilinguals have been administered in English, the language they are less proficient in. It’s possible that the outcome would have been different if bilinguals were assessed in Welsh, Spanish, or Hebrew instead. As a result, the tests were biased against bilinguals. Second, apples to oranges comparisons were not made. Those who spoke two languages often hailed from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, such as New York City or rural Wales. Researchers have shown that there is a positive correlation between a child’s IQ and their ability to pick up a second language. (Ganschow and Sparks, 2001). Latest researches have shown that bilingual speakers do at least as well as monolinguals on IQ tests. Balanced bilinguals

often have a modest cognitive edge over their monolingual counterparts. Intelligence showed a medium-sized facilitative impact on the acquisition of both languages with comparable intensity (Senar et al., 2022). On the other hand, Intelligence as a concept and the usage of intelligence quotient are contentious and strongly contested. Gardner's (2011) multiple intelligences hypothesis, which contains eight unique forms of intelligence, is a challenge to the concept of a single intelligence quotient. Anyway, according to the vast majority of experts, there are several beneficial associations between bilingualism and cognitive performance. When a youngster has age-appropriate proficiency in both of his or her languages, he or she may have cognitive benefits over monolinguals (Baker, 2014).

Metalinguistic Awareness

When discussing bilingualism and cognition, the metalinguistic awareness of bilingual children has been studied extensively. Language transfer study finds that bilingual children can generalize phonological awareness from one's native language into a foreign one and that bilingual children respond strongly to distinct phonetic units in both languages (Cisero and Royer, 1995). From the perspective of information processing, detecting two different sound symbols can strengthen children's ability to analyze the input speech, so bilingual children can encode unfamiliar speech information more effectively than monolingual children (Baker, 2014). It is more interesting to find that bilingual children have a higher phonetic short-term memory, particularly a greater phonetic working memory, which may serve as a basis for the creation of long-term phonetic representations of new words (Gathercole, 2006). And in terms of lexical awareness, coexistence of two distinct language systems that express the same set of ideas increases bilingual children's lexical awareness (Yelland, et al., 1993). Furthermore, children that grow up learning two languages have superior discrimination skills and correct semantic errors in syntax that defy logic because of their enhanced syntactic awareness (Bialystok 1986). Children who are bilingual in English and French have been shown to outperform both monolingual and semi-bilingual peers on a syntax correction task (Bialystok and

Majumder, 1998).

Generally speaking, in terms of metalinguistic awareness, bilingual children have stronger phonological, lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic awareness than monolingual children, but orthographic awareness is not necessarily stronger, and there is even negative transfer. Bilingual kids are better at picking up new languages and using them than their single-language counterparts (Bialystok, Anderson and Grundy, 2018).

To sum up, there are numerous external and internal aspects to consider while parenting a bilingual kid. The process of bringing up a kid to be multilingual is a difficult one, whether seen from the perspective of the country as a whole, the family, or the individual child. The parent, in their role as language planter, is able to assist enhance those circumstances that are susceptible to impact; nonetheless, parents are unable to regulate the development of their children's linguistic abilities (Baker, 2014).

B. Advice for parents bringing up bilingual children

Being able to communicate fluently in two different tongues is just one aspect of being bilingual. There is a distinction to be made between the capacity to use language and actually doing so. There is a broad diversity of bilingual families due to factors such as the linguistic competence of parents, the accessibility of language practise opportunities within the larger family, and the composition of the local language community or area. As a result, I will provide guidance from a multilingual perspective, taking into account the fact that bilingualism is the accepted standard and that the languages spoken by a bilingual person are interconnected and coexist, or as constituting an unified linguistic system (García & Li Wei, 2014).

Firstly, learning a new language is a social activity that occurs within the context of human interaction. The family is then the smaller unit of this human interaction. What family language policy parents adopt affects children's language identity in some ways. I think that adopting the one-parent one-language (OPOL) policy in the family is a realistic decision for multilingual parents to choose. The goal of the OPOL approach is to minimise as much as possible the code-mixing of bilingual children

and to nurture bilinguals who are skilled in utilising two distinct languages. If the children continue to mix languages, it is possible that it is related to the language mixing ratio of the parents and the influence that they have on how their children utilise language. The success of parenting a bilingual kid in accordance with OPOL policy relies on both parents and children strictly adhering to the policy. However, it is a dilemma that children living in cross-cultural settings where the prevailing language is not their mother tongue are at danger of losing minority languages and cultures. Consequently, parents are free to decide under what conditions and in what manner they will implement the OPOL policy in accordance with the specifics of the case.

Secondly, internal factors of learners such as intelligence, age, learning motivation, linguistic aptitude, learning strategies, and metalinguistic awareness are examples of influential factors that contribute to individual differences. I agree that learning motivation is the most active factor among the individual differences. The predominant viewpoint after the turn of the 21st century is that in comparison to adolescents and adults, children have a natural advantage in motivation. This is due to the fact that children have not yet started to recognise and preserve the linguistic as well as cultural identification of their main language, nor have they begun to do so yet, which results in a higher acceptance of the target culture and the second language (Dörnyei and Skehan, 2003). Therefore, activities that are just a little bit difficult, feedback that places an emphasis on self-improvement, providing children with the autonomy to decide on their own learning resources and techniques, and providing guidance on study strategies are all beneficial for enhancing children's desire to learn. The development of bilingualism should be surrounded by a pleasant environment, a loving attitude, and an ambiance that fosters family-like assistance; this may be achieved by encouragement and praise that is appropriately directed (Baker, 2014).

Furthermore, the development of children's reading skills is greatly aided by the cultivation of their metalinguistic awareness. The ability to think critically about and concentrate on the language's framework, including phonological awareness, orthographic awareness, morpheme awareness, and syntactic awareness, is what is

commonly meant by the term “linguistic awareness.” The results of research conducted on these topics have vital and practical implications for a number of areas, including the forecasting of the progress that will be made in the reading skills of youngsters, the analysis and classification of reading difficulties and impairments, and the improvement of children’s reading abilities. Thus, I recommend that parents pay more attention to the impact of second language children’s metalinguistic awareness on their reading abilities and give suitable assistance.

Thirdly, external factors such as language input and socioeconomic status are also examples of important factors. Here, I will elaborate on language input. Unsworth (2016) pointed out that the learning of a target language by youngsters may be facilitated more effectively by the provision of a substantial amount of outstanding linguistic input, regardless of the fact that they are communicating in a foreign language or a second language in the situation. Accordingly, it is important to provide constructive criticism of the plan that merely require pupils to constantly read aloud and memorise restricted phrase patterns and dialogues. Ongoing language correction, such as making the kid repeat sentences, has little or no impact on language development and may even be detrimental (Baker, 2014). It is desirable to enhance the efficacy of children’s language acquisition by utilising a substantial amount of genuine resources, such as audio and video input in their original language, as the main technique.

It is undeniable that the complexity of the bilingualism has a greater impact on learning a second language. So, while considering second language acquisition, if the interaction among the external variables, individual differences and metalinguistic factors is not included, it is just the failure to provide plausible explanations for second language acquisition. Parents and educators are responsible for staying current with changing trends and collaborating on strategies to foster bilingualism in their children.

References

- Baker, C. and Wright, W. E. (2001) *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. 7th edn. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Baker, C. (2014) *A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism*. 2nd edn. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Bernardini, P. and Schlyter, S. (2004) 'Growing Syntactic Structure and Code-Mixing in the Weaker Language: The Ivy Hypothesis'. *Bilingualism*. 7 (1), 49-69.
- Bialystok, E. (1986) 'Children's Concept of Word'. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*. 15: 13-32.
- Bialystok, E. and Majumder, S. (1998) 'The Relationship Between Bilingualism and the Development of Cognitive Processes in Problem Solving'. *Applied Psycholinguistics*. 19: 69-85.
- Bialystok, E., Anderson, J.A. and Grundy, J.G. (2018) 'Interpreting Cognitive Decline in the Face of Cognitive Reserve: Does Bilingualism Affect Cognitive aging?' *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*. <https://doi.org/10.1075/lab.18040.bia>.
- Birdsong, D. (2006) 'Age and Second Language Acquisition and Processing: a Selective Overview'. *Language Learning*. 56 (1), 9-49.
- Cisero, C. A. and Royer, J. M. (1995) 'The development and Cross-language Transfer of Phonological Awareness'. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*. 20: 275-303.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2019) 'From Integrative Motivation to Directed Motivational Currents: The Evolution of the Understanding of L2 Motivation over three decades. In Lamb, M., Csizér, K., Henry, A. and Ryan, S. eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of Motivation for Language Learning*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Dörnyei, Z. and Skehan, P. (2003) 'Individual Differences in Second Language Learning', in Doughty, C. J. and Long, M. H. eds. *The Handbook of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2020) *Innovations and Challenges in Language Learning Motivation*. New York: Routledge.
- Ellis, R. (2008) *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gardner, R.C. and Lambert, W.E. (1972) *Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Gardner, H. (2011) *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.
- García O. and Li Wei (2014) *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism, and Education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ganschow, L., and Sparks, R. (2001). 'Learning Difficulties and Foreign Language Learning: a Review of Research and Instruction. *Language Teaching*. 34(2): 79–98. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444800015895>
- Gathercole, S. E. (2006) 'Nonword Repetition and Word Learning: the Nature of the Relationship'. *Applied Psycholinguistics*. 27: 513-543.
- Genesee, F. (2007) 'A Short Guide to Raising Children Bilingually'. *Multilingual Living Magazine*. Available at: <http://www.biculturalfamily.org> (Accessed: Jan/Feb 2007).
- Grüter, T. and Paradis, J. (2014) *Input and Experience in Bilingual Development (Trends in Language Acquisition Research)*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Lambert, W.E. (1974) 'Culture and Language as Factors in Learning and Education. In Aboud, F.E. and Meade, R.D. eds. *Cultural Factors in Learning and Education*. Bellingham, WA: 5th Western Washington Symposium on Learning.

- Montrul, S. A. (2008) 'Incomplete Acquisition in Bilingualism: Re-examining the Age Factor'. *Studies in Bilingualism*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Paradis, J. and Genesee, F. (1996) 'Syntactic Acquisition in Bilingual Children'. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*. 18 (1), 1-25.
- Quay, S. and Chevalier, S. (2019) 'Fostering Multilingualism in Childhood, in Montanari, S. and Quay, S. (eds) *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Multilingualism: The Fundamentals*. Boston, MA: De Gruyter Mouton, pp. 205–228.
- Scovel, T. (2000) 'A Critical Review of the Critical Period Research'. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*. 20, 213 – 223.
- Senar, F., Serrat, E, Huguet, A. and Janés, J. (2022) 'Second language acquisition in a language immersion context. A structural model about the role of intelligence and language attitudes'. *Revista de Psicodidáctica*. 28:59-66.
- Singleton, D.M. and Ryan, L. (2004) *Language Acquisition: The Age Factor*. 2nd edn. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Singleton, D.M. and Muñoz, C. (2011) 'Around and Beyond the Critical Period Hypothesis'. In Hinkel, E. ed. *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning*. 2, pp. 407–425.
- Unsworth, S. (2016) 'Early child L2 acquisition: age or input effects? Neither, or both?'. *Journal of Child Language*. 43(3): 608-634.
- Yelland, G. W., Pollard, J. and Mercuri, A. (1993) 'The Metalinguistic Benefits of Limited Contact With a Second Language'. *Applied Psycholinguistics*. 14: 423-444.

