

Content: **Assignment 1(A+B) of HPEN7006 - Current Theories of
Second Language**

Student: Liang Yuan

Supervisor(s): Dr Jessica Clapham

School: University of Wales, Trinity Saint David

Table of Content

1. What effect will bilingualism have on my child's intelligence?.....	2
2. Advice to parents on their children's code-switching between languages.....	5
.	

What effect will bilingualism have on my child's intelligence?

1. Introduction

In the book *Baker, C. (2014) A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon*, Mr Baker addresses a total of 145 questions on how to raise children bilingually, all of which are topics that educators and parents care so much about. As a university professor of bilingualism as well as a successful bilingual children raiser, he provides answers to the questions that encompass various aspects of children's bilingual education, such as Family Issues, Language Development, Problems, Reading and Writing, Education Issues, and Concluding Issues. In easy-to-understand language, Mr Baker provides his professional advice for families and schools on making bilingual education decisions as well as valuable reference for other professionals such as doctors, speech therapists, practicing psychologists and counselors.

In this essay, I will examine one of the 145 questions in detail, which is "What effect will bilingualism have on my child's intelligence?", in relation to my own experience as a bilingual learner and bilingual educator.

2. Effects of bilingualism on children's intelligence

First of all, I would like to provide a brief summary or description of Mr Baker's answer to the question. He explained that in the past, bilingual children were believed to have lower IQ than monolingual children by some researchers. Through IQ tests, they concluded that bilingual children's brains were confused because two languages in their head may conflict with each other. However, if we take a closer look at how the research was designed, we can find that such a conclusion does not hold ground. Firstly, the IQ test was usually conducted in English, which is the weaker language for the bilinguals. Secondly, the subjects of the tests were from different social and economic background, with bilinguals from poor or rural families and monolinguals from affluent and well-educated urban families. Thirdly, traditional IQ tests cannot measure intelligence that is a much wider concept. According to psychologist Howard Gardner, everyone has at least 7 categories of intelligence, namely Linguistic Intelligence, Logic Intelligence, Kinesthetic Intelligence, Spatial Intelligence, Musical Intelligence, Interpersonal Intelligence and Intrapersonal Intelligence. Over the years, each person develops one area more thoroughly and that area then supersedes the others. Therefore, the traditional IQ tests were invalid to test children's intelligence because the subjects were not weighed on the same scale.

On the contrary, Mr Baker points out that balanced bilinguals (meaning people with basically equal competence in two languages) enjoy some superiority and advantages over monolinguals, as supported by the latest studies. For instance, in terms of thinking, bilinguals are more divergent than monolinguals, meaning children with two or more languages in their head are more capable of providing original, imaginative and open-ended answers to questions. Their thinking advantages also include higher sensitivity to communication, faster cognitive development, and being more

meaning-entered on the words. Another advantages they have over monolinguals are the selective attention and multitasking. They can carry out multitasks without being too much distracted because their brain's executive control system is more enhanced than monolinguals as a result of frequently processing two languages. Moreover, it is evidenced that bilinguals with enhanced cognitive ability suffer less from Alzheimer's disease.

Now, I would like to examine Mr Baker advice in relation to my own experience. I totally agree with Mr Baker that bilinguals or multilinguals are more original, creative, imaginative and divergent in their thinking. Being a multilingual (Chinese, English and Japanese) myself, I can contrast the similarities and differences of Chinese, English and Japanese on the phonological, lexical, grammatical and discourse level, which allows me to gain in-depth insights into the three languages. For example, compared to Chinese bamboo-like sentence structure with segments joined together, English sentence is like a tree with one trunk as the main clause and many branches as subordinate clauses. Moreover, bilingualism or multilingualism cultivate more than just linguistic competence. I can think of different cultural connotations of many similar concepts in three languages. For example, “龙(dragon)” in Chinese mythology is a legendary creature with a snake-body, four eagle legs and two deer antlers, which symbolises potent and auspicious powers. However, when learning the English word “dragon”, I gained additional knowledge of it in Western culture, which is winged, horned, four-legged, capable of breathing fire, and usually portrayed as a monster to be tamed or overcome. Possessing both languages in my brain has definitely enriched my thinking and understanding.

I also agree with Mr Baker in terms of bilingualism increasing sensitivity to communication. Reflecting on my past teaching experience, I came to realise how to switch between English and Chinese, to achieve the best teaching effects. At the very beginning of my teaching career, I conducted my teaching in Chinese much more than English. That was because I was inexperienced and lacked strong command of English. I had to use my stronger language, which was Chinese, to express myself adequately. This gave my students less exposure to the English language and they had less opportunities to interact with the teacher in English. As my experience grew and I became more proficient with English, I attempted to increase my English in class until I could conduct my teaching entirely in English. I also required my students to speak English only in my class. I had thought that would help my students learn English. However, this only result in inadequate communication and understanding between students and me in such circumstance, making the students feeling frustrated and less motivated to carry on. Then I changed this practice by allowing my students to use Chinese when they feel inadequate and myself occasionally speak Chinese to clarify complicated ideas and to ensure complete understanding. Thanks to bilingualism, I have found the most effective way of communication with my class, which is also in line with Mr Baker's view using both languages in classroom teaching.

Another experience was my teaching a 7-year-old Chinese girl *IQ and Aptitude Tests*. Her parents wanted to prepare her for her future overseas study in the UK, so they chose the *IQ and Aptitude Tests* book written in English, which was from the UK, and asked me to guide her. Though the little girl was far from a balanced bilingual, she could basically understand the instructions and the exercises with my explaining a few difficult words. Considering her English level, my explanation

was mostly in Chinese. So during my teaching, her thinking had to switch frequently between Chinese and English. What surprised me was that, after a period of time, she had no problem figuring out the IQ and Aptitude questions at all. Regardless of English or Chinese, in which she was receiving information, she could completely focus on and analyse the meaning of what was going on and came up with the correct answers to each of the tests. I think this is evidence of what Mr Baker said “bilinguals are better placed to think about two different things and switch between them, focusing on what is relevant and ignoring the rest.”

However, what Mr Baker argues about bilinguals’ advantage of multitasking does not seem to exactly match my experience. According to his research literature, bilinguals’ driving performance, when given extra tasks while driving at the same time, decreased less than monolinguals, because they have greater control of attention in internal language processing. I agree to this point if the bilinguals have the opportunity to frequently switch between two languages. For example, I think this may be the case if a child lives in a bilingual family, where they need to speak, for instance, English to his/her parents and Welsh to his/her grandparents. Another circumstance in which bilinguals gain greater control of attention is a simultaneous interpreting which trains people with multitasking skills - they listen to the source language, decode it and produce a meaningful utterances in the target language at the same time. Such multitasking skills are obtained through plenty of intense training. However, in China, most students learn English as a foreign language only in classroom. Once they get out the classroom, they rarely have the opportunities to use English. In such language environment, they do little to switch between two languages frequently, and lack the intensity of training to be able to multitask. Therefore, they are not likely to perform better than monolinguals in multitasking, such as driving test with extra tasks to undertake.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr Baker has provided excellent advice on bilingualism in his book *A Parents’ and Teachers’ Guide to Bilingualism*. As an educator of bilingualism, I will conduct my teaching based on the wisdom of this book. However, bilingualism and multilingualism are complicated issues and the situations where bilingualism and multilingualism take place vary a lot. Therefore, I will draw on existing research for my teaching, and at the same time, make further scientific research to discover their laws and nature.

Reference

- Baker C. (2001). *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, Multilingual Matters*, Clevedon.
- Baker, C (2014). *A Parents’ and Teachers’ Guide to Bilingualism, Multilingual Matters*, Clevedon
- 陈宝国 (2004). 双语双文教学促进小学生智力、非智力因素发展的研究. *心理科学*. 2004, 27 (1): 97—100
- 温志军. (1993). 双语管理研究述评. *《外语教学与研究》*. 第 3 期

Advice to parents on their children's code-switching between languages

1. Introduction

As parents of bilingual children (meaning they can speak two languages, for example, English and Chinese), you may have questions as to “What is it exactly that my children code switch between two languages?” “Is it a problem or a benefit?”, “Does switching between two languages have any value or purpose?” From bilingual perspective, this report provides you information that could help you better understand these issues. First, a definition of code-switching is introduced. Then, it intends to remove the doubt of many parents whether code-switching is a problem or not. Next, with examples, it illustrates the rationale of bilingual children's going code-switching in a single conversation. At last, it provides some advice on how parents and teachers should guide their bilingual children to better code-switch between languages.

2. What is code-switching?

If your bilingual children talk to someone who shares the same languages as his/hers, code-switching occurs. They use words, sentences or even large blocks of speech from both languages. For instance, he/she may say to his/her friends: “我们去 canteen 吃饭! (Let's go to canteen for lunch!)”, or “帮我 check-check. (Help me check for it)”. Instead of messing up the words in their languages, they can interchangeably use the words and phrases from both or multiple languages when they fit into the situation. Such a linguistic action or ability as to alternate two or more languages is code-switching.

3. Is code-switching a problem?

Some parents worry that code-switching may cause their children to mix up both languages and end up with a confused mind. However, as a parent, you don't need to worry about it at all. According to the latest research, bilingual children can develop their two language systems autonomously and interdependently. If your child switches between languages, he/she is demonstrating his/her flexibility of language skills and ability to access two language systems when there is a need to communicate a message most effectively. Increasing number of research projects demonstrate that bilingual children are able to tell two different languages as to who are talking, and where and when the conversation is taking place. Therefore, rather than mixing up two languages, bilingual children can develop both languages separately. Though seemingly casual, they do not randomly choose their words and ignore the grammar when code-switching. In real-life situations, they apply conscious as well as unconscious strategies to make their communication understandable and natural.

4. When do bilingual children go code-switching?

They go code-switching sometimes when they cannot find exact vocabulary and have difficulty expressing themselves adequately in one language. More importantly, however, they use it as a strategy for many other purposes.

First, your bilingual children might switch to a minority language when they want to communicate friendship and fit into the minority-language community. For example, if your children study in an international school where his/her classmates are from various countries, he/she would use the native language of a particular language group that he/she likes to make friends with. Your children alter their language to express their group identification.

When they discuss a mathematics or computer terminology, they switch to the language in which the terminology is originally taught, which will help them understand and communicate the concepts more directly. In such cases, they switch codes in their communication about a particular topic when specific language is necessary or best applied.

Your children may quote Confucious words: “有朋自远方来不亦乐乎！ in Chinese” and switch to English to explain to you: “It is delightful to have friends coming from afar!” In this way, the original discourse is best expressed.

Your children may resort to code-switching when they have problem getting specific words or concepts across to the people they are talking to. For example, when they teach their grandparents to use smartphone for shopping, in most cases, the grandparents may fail to understand new things explained in English, when they will switch to their native language to clarify the main steps.

Cod-switching can also ease tension and create humor. If two parties at the negotiating table are arguing heatedly, the switch to another language may help both parties to relax the tense atmosphere and make the negotiation go more smoothly.

When they want to say something in secret, bilingual people will code-switch to a dialect, language, or accent that people they want to avoid do not understand. This way, he or she may get better deals or prices when buying any products or service.

Sometimes, code-switching can take place unconsciously. They may go through code-switching without realising it. Such cases happen when somebody is frightened by a specific circumstance. For instance, once Robin Li, Baidu CEO, was giving a presentation in Chinese in front of a large audience in Beijing, a man from the audience jumped on stage and poured a bottle of water over his head. Shocked by such an accident, he unconsciously switched his presentation in Chinese to English: “What's your problem?”

5. Conclusion and Advice

Now you should be clear that children's code-switching is not a bad thing, it helps them use all their languages to express themselves as fully as possible. So, how should you guide your children

to better code-switch? As parents and teachers, we should expect and encourage children to code switch, and act as their language models. For instance, we should create bilingual language learning environment for children to communicate in. we should act as a good listener when they try to express themselves during code switching. Let code-switching help them develop their communication and language skills and learn more!

Reference

Baker C. (2001). *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, Multilingual Matters*, Clevedon.

Baker, C. (2014). *A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism, Multilingual Matters*, Clevedon

JEAN BERKOGLEASON. Cognitive Development and Acquisition of Language. 1973, Pages 159-167

Ilana Reyes. (2010). Functions of Code Switching in Schoolchildren's Conversations. *Bilingual Research Journal*. Pages 77-98

范琳, 李绍山. (2013). 汉-英-日三语者语言产出过程中语码转换的抑制加工—基于刺激反应设置影响的研究. *外语教学与研究*. 2013. 01

范琳, 卢植. (2015). 双语语言产出过程中语码转换加工机制—从行为研究到神经认知研究. *外语与外语教学*. 2015, 02