

Bilingual Education Learning to Engage in Academic Activities

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of the research are the following reasons: The competition of pursuing further education; English lessons were given in junior high schools in the past, but has gradually progressed to the situation where elementary students have to study English as it has become an important subject for examination, so it is natural that bilingualism exists in the area. Research method the researcher conducted interviews and recordings under the consent of teachers and parents; the researcher compiled a semi-structured interview outline based on literature reviews and research purposes. Cross comparison was carried out on the result data and other relevant documents were referred to for conducting triangulation of sources. The researcher found that the objective of bilingual education was for the students to become balanced bilinguals, i.e. being able to understand school courses taught in two languages and use the two languages to engage in academic activities.

Keywords: Bilingual Education, Globalization, Competence

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INTRODUCTION

Ever since the Government has promoted the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Regional Operations Center, many people feel that English communication skills must be improved aggressively and urgently (Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, & Daley, 1999). Under the eager expectations of the society, the teaching of the English language has been pushed up from the English classes in junior high schools to elementary schools. After acquiring the certificate of elementary school teacher of English from the Ministry of Education, the researcher has taught English at elementary schools for over a decade and has always been interested in information related to English teaching. The fact of the matter is bilingual education has been implemented abroad for years. For example, Spanish is a second language in the U.S., and French is another language for communication in Canada because 70% of the immigrants are originally from Europe (Stuart, 2009).

Parents in Canada can even choose to let their children attend schools that use French as the primary language or those that teach in English but offer bilingual programs or French lessons. The education systems in European countries require children to learn the language of an adjacent nation or a second language, and the results have been good (Baker, 2001). Even though the theory of

bilingual education of foreign nations cannot be fully implemented in Taiwan due to differences in environment, cultural and social backgrounds between Taiwan and foreign countries, but the theory and method are worth referencing for application in our English education. In many kindergartens and elementary schools, and even junior and senior high schools, international language programs or bilingual programs push the education in Taiwan into the open world market, anticipating that our children can enter the more extensive international market in the future. People in Taiwan have begun to realize the necessity of English proficiency, and many parents have chosen to let their children attend bilingual schools to strengthen their competitive advantage (Noels, 2001).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

During the process of exploring the beliefs and contents of teaching and the effects toward bilingual learning, the researcher conducted interviews and recordings under the consent of teachers and parents; the researcher compiled a semi-structured interview outline based on literature reviews and research purposes (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). The recordings were translated into transcripts after the interviews, and the researcher wrote down his reflections before, during and after each interview for data

analysis (Gardner, Smythe, Clément, 1979). Cross comparison was carried out on the result data and other relevant documents were referred to for conducting triangulation of sources.

Research Subjects

The participants in this research were chosen by using the method of purposive sampling, and multiple unofficial interviews and one official interview were conducted. The participant selection process, basic information and research scenario are explained below.

Participant Selection Process

The researcher determined the research topic through literature reading and began to ponder on how to select the participants. When the researcher was reading literatures on beliefs, he discovered that the participants in most of the articles on bilingualism were mostly elementary and junior high school teachers and only a few studies on other topics involved participants who were Taiwanese bilingual children. Based on the above considerations, the researcher decided to employ bilingual students as the primary research subjects.

Basic Information of Participants

The course of the subject's (a teacher) learning had been smooth, but his family requested for him to attend a school with bilingual programs at the age of two. The teacher had a lively personality and was filled with a happy energy, generous to share and passionate (Chapelle & Roberts, 1986). He was popular amongst his peers in the bilingual school. He adopted active methods in class to interact with the students, so he often interacted and shared discussions with students in class, making him also popular amongst students. Before carrying out the official research, the researcher had witnessed multiple times the scene where the subject was getting along with other children.

Bilingual Education Models

What are the functions of bilingual education? They can be induced into the following:

Bilingual education can help migratory students overcome language, psychological and cultural obstacles: by learning with teachers and peers who speak their native language and English and have the same language and cultural background, students can overcome cultural impacts.

Bilingual education can facilitate the enhancement of cognitive ability and be helpful in learning professional knowledge: an increasing number of studies carried out by scholars has proven that bilingual education is beneficial to students' flexibility, abstraction and imaginary ability when thinking, as well as their multi-language interchange ability, concept development, creativity, semantic development, analysis reasoning, and spatial relation ability. When students can understand the language used by a teacher, they can comprehend the teaching contents and perform better.

Bilingual education can preserve the native languages and the traditional characteristics of individual cultures; language and culture are inseparable and can influence one's self-concept deeply.

A public elementary school in Miami established a Spanish-English bilingual education program in 1963 to

offer immigrants from Cuba a comprehensive two-way bilingual education. Three years later, an evaluation report indicated that the participating students were able to learn the Spanish and English languages and cultures effectively, which led to an increasing number of people realizing that education required legislative support (Desrochers & Gardner, 1981). The purpose of the act is to assist localities in promoting bilingual education to help students with limited English proficiency (LEP). Based on the Act, the federal government has designated annual budgets to support school districts in establishing bilingual education programs as well as various related works, such as teacher training, materials compilation and course evaluation (Rodríguez & Abreu, 2003).

Two-Way Model

The main purpose of this model was to allow students to successfully develop in life both their native language and target language, as well as for them to learn about and grow up under both cultures. Of course, languages and cultures would not be preserved passively in the variable social pattern with diversified cultures, but education and people-to-people diplomacy could be developed actively. Take for instance the bilingual education of Chinese and English, the native language of half of the students was English, while that of the other half was Chinese. There were approximately 50,000 students learning by adopting this bilingual model in 1999. This model had the following principles (Baker, 2001):

Native language was used for at least 50% of the teaching; such situation could last up to six years at the most.

Only one language was used for each teaching phase. Teaching was adjusted according to the language proficiency of students, and they learned the language through teaching materials.

The number of students using the native language and those that uses the target language occupies an even distribution, so all courses used two languages.

GATHERING OF INTERVIEW DATA

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the subjects (teachers), including multiple unofficial interviews and one official interview. In addition to recording, the researcher translated the interview contents into textual data for analysis and proof.

Three types of data were acquired through the interviews: (I) The researcher's concepts; (II) the teachers' teaching concepts; and (III) the concepts of parents toward bilingual programs. The research was carried out from April to September 2019, to provide information completeness and richness.

Data Analysis

The researcher must generate an interactive relation with the research field and subjects during the in-depth interviews and observe relevant phenomena through such interaction process. In order to enhance the accuracy of data collection, the researcher might make audio or video recordings during the entire research process and translate the recordings for analysis.

RESEARCH RESULTS

While interviewing the parents, the researcher found that the objective of bilingual education was for the students to become balanced bilinguals, i.e. being able to understand school courses taught in two languages and use the two languages to engage in academic activities (Krashen, 2003). Although the children would not be punished for speaking their native language in school, such a non-native language environment would give out a message naturally, that is, teachers would remind the students that if they want to learn in this school, they would have to give up their native language speaking and cultural thinking and method.

After the interviews, the researcher discovered that teachers played a very important role, because they can convey to children the knowledge language about cognition through different languages (Pearson, 2008). The strong acknowledgement message of the value of a native language and the fact that bilingualism is important to the accomplishment of language proficiency and intellect help children preserve and develop their native language (Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, & Daley, 1999). Do not interfere with children's learning of their native language. "No Chinese" is basically violating the right of children to learn their native language. There are a lot of activities in courses for children to learn the contents, and the teachers of course must play an encouraging role for them to be engaged in the activities to be focused on developing the linguistic awareness of children.

During interviews regarding the learning state of mind of bilingual children, the researcher found that "problem-solving" education was still dominant in the schools of most European and American countries, because the teachers would not learn a foreign language to communicate with the children of a different race (Fielding, 2007). Therefore, we still hope that languages can be integrated into children's life through diversified orientation (Rosenfeld & Berko, 1990). Unfortunately, such native language replacement learning may cause a problem in the communication between the children and their family. Such a method of forcing a child to learn a second language is depriving his/her right to receive educational language, and the communication and harmonization between the child and the parents may be worse due to linguistic problems (McCarty, 2010a). There is an increasing number of new Taiwanese, if a child, or even the teacher, can bring a significant vocabulary from the native language to the class, the usage of the word can be integrated into the learning and discussion (McCarty, 2010b).

DISCUSSION

In a family scenario, teacher at school or frontline educators are rarely aware of the speed of children losing their ability to use their native language, as well as the speed to which they lose their native language (Daly, 1991). The extent and speed of the loss of native language are different depending on the teaching of teachers at school and the usage by peers learning the language in their family and community. For example: if Chinese families account for a greater proportion in the school, the linguistic loss of

children will decrease. However, if a linguistic community is not concentrated in a specific community, children will naturally lose their ability to communicate in their native language in 2-3 years. They can preserve their acceptance (understanding) ability in conversations, but they will use multiple languages to speak with their siblings and people of the same age, and to respond to their parents. When a child becomes a teenager, the language gap between him and his parents will become greater, because there is an emotional barrier. If a child is constantly separated from family and school cultures, it can be predicted that he would lose his native language faster.

CONCLUSION

Changes are happening in the world day by day. Educators and policy makers in Taiwan are facing the challenge of how to shape an evolution recognized by people of diversified cultures so that all students can be respect for their right of using their native language and the cultures, from language to economic resources, can be maximized (Daly, 1991). Looking from the angle of a nation's benefits, it is wrong for schools or educators to discourage children developing their native language, and it is also an infringement to the right of children to preserve and learn their native language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

How can schools and communities provide appropriate education for children with diversified cultures and languages? The first step is to understand the language the child speaks, especially the function of the child's native language in his/her educational development.

Study the extent of comprehensiveness in the development of the native language. As explained, we are very aware of the importance of a bilingual child's native language toward his/her overall educational development (Hismanoglu, 2013). More detailed conclusive results can be found in literatures by Baker (2000), Cummins (2000), and Skutnabbkangas (2000).

Bilingualism has a positive effect on the linguistic and educational development of children. When children's abilities are developed in elementary school in two or more languages, they can understand more deeply the languages and how to use them effectively (McCroskey, & Anderson, 1976). If they have more practice in processing the languages, especially when they are developing their writing and reading skills, they will be able to compare the way they organize and realize the two languages. In the past 35 years, over 150 studies have supported a statement by Goth, "One who knows only one language does not know the language". The research indicates that, through two different language processing information, the thinking of bilingual children can be more flexible.

Based on the previous research results, it has indicated: (a) Bilingual system gives children language advantages and, (b) the abilities to speak or read in two languages are significantly correlated or interdependent, both of which are not surprising. When a school teaches the native language effectively, the students will perform better in school, and use the language to cultivate their literacy under appropriate situations (Samimy, 1994). However,

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when a child's native language is encouraged to be put back and the development is stopped, the individual and conceptual basics learnt by the child will be harmed.

We know how it happened by summing up the above research results. When children learning through the languages of minorities, they are not only learning the language from a narrow sense, they are learning the concepts and intellectual skills equivalent to the working functions in most languages (Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, & Daley, 1999). The students who know how to explain time understand the concept of telling time. In order to explain time by using a second language (e.g. multiple languages), they don't have to relearn to explain the concept of time, because they only have to acquire a new label or "surface structure" for the learnt intellectual skill. Similarly, in more advanced stages, academic and literacy skills have cross0language transfers. For example, knowing how to distinguish between primary thoughts and supporting details of sections or stories, determine cause-effect relations, distinguish facts and viewpoints, and drafting sequential stories or historical events (Rosenfeld & Berko, 1990).

Create a future dynamic identity for an educator establishing the linguistic policies and organizing the courses and teaching so that the languages and cultural capitals of children and communities can be fully recognized in all the interactions in schools, and the schools can reject all negative attitudes and ignorance, as well as exist in the diversity of more extensive societies (Sanchez-Herrero & Sanchez, 1992). When challenging a mandatory authority, the schools can provide a mirror for bilingual children to show who they are and that they can be a member of the society.

As educators, if we practice what we believe are real to the children, they will make massive contributions to the society and the world. Cultural and linguistic experiences at home are the bases of children, and we must use such establishment in future learning, instead of destroying it (Elkhafaifi, 2005). Every child has the right to recognize the talents that will grow with them in school.

In brief, when we no longer see children with cultural and language diversification as "problems waiting to be solved", the cultural, linguistic and intellectual capitals of our society will be increases immensely, so we will see the linguistic, cultural and intellectual resources brought by them from their home to our schools and communities.

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