“IT’S AN IDENTITY THING FOR ME”: REASONS FOR HERITAGE LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE IN FAMILY SETTING

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ABSTRACT

In a country like Australia, where the population is culturally diverse, it is a common practice for families to speak languages other than English in their homes. In spite of this commonness, parents have wide range of motivations for desiring their children to be able to speak their community language. This paper looks at why parents maintain their community language with their children within the family setting. As a part of a bigger research discussion, this paper views the topic through the parents’ points of view and presents the discussion on the parents’ experiences, which constructs an understanding of the phenomena. The researcher interviewed seven participants from seven immigrant families who live in Melbourne Australia. With English as the formal and dominant language spoken by the society, the families apply their own family language policy in using the heritage language. The findings show that among several reasons for parents raising their children bilingually in Australia, the intention to maintain the heritage culture and cultural identity, to which parents associate language with, is very important. The other reasons are the aim to maintain communication with the (parents’) home country, attaining the benefit for their children in relation to cognitive development, and the instrumental motivation involving parents’ hope for their children’s future benefits in the job market. This paper contributes to the discussion in the area of child bilingualism, about why many parents –especially in a diverse context such as Melbourne Australia- want to maintain the heritage language. With the participating parents’ viewpoints, this study is expected to present broader perspectives in the study area and contribute to a deeper discussion about bilingualism in the family context.

Field of Research: bilingualism, heritage culture, cultural identity, family.

1. Introduction

Australia with its diverse population has many heritage languages spoken at home. Specifically in Melbourne, according to the 2006 census of Australian Bureau of Statistics, there are two Local Government Areas (LGA) with the highest number of LOTE speakers around the area where the study is conducted, which are Greater Dandenong with 55.2% of the population speak LOTE and Monash with 38.6% of the population speak LOTE (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2008).

Although it is a common practice for families to speak languages other than English in their homes, parents’ motivations for raising their children bilingually vary. This paper presents a description about seven families under study who raise their children bilingually. Discussing the experiences of each
family, this paper exposes and discusses the family language policy and their motivation in raising their children bilingually.

The discussion in this paper is expected to enrich the conversation in the field of bilingualism and second language acquisition.

2. Review of Literature

Mother Tongue, First Language and Heritage Language

Discussion of the terms ‘heritage language’, ‘mother tongue’, 'first language', and 'native language' takes place in the following paragraphs to present the concept used in this study. The term mother tongue has often been used to refer to an individual’s first language (Romaine, 1995). Besides arguing that the first language a person learns may not be the language she or he masters the best, Romaine (1995) also indicates that a person’s mother tongue can change within time. The language that the person identifies with is his or her mother tongue, and this is often the language that the person knows best.

A definition for the term mother tongue is given by Beardsmore (1981) who argues mother tongue often means “the language best known which is assumed to be the first learnt” (p.35). Another description of the term is given by Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) who describes mother tongue from the word origin, which is “mother,” as the language which the mother speaks. This is close to the definition of mother tongue as the language a child learns first given by Beardsmore. Further, he describes mother tongue in relation to competence, function, and attitudes. In relation to competence, mother tongue is defined as the language a person knows best, which is similar to Romaine’s description above. This definition sounds simple and unambiguous, and it is often used by decision makers, teachers, and parents when they need to decide where to place children for some purpose. In the area of function or use, she describes mother tongue as the language a person uses most, although this definition is not perfect because people are often obliged to use a language that is not their primary language without knowing it well, for example at work (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981).

The term heritage language is mostly suitable when described as the language which the mother or parents speak, which is described by Skutnabb-Kangas in the above paragraph, and can be assumed as the language which is first learnt as described by Beardsmore above. The discussion in this paper will not use the term first language, and will use heritage language to describe the language that is learnt first by children from their parents.

As Hornberger (2005), discusses, the term heritage language has been used by scholars and educators in the USA as a neutral and inclusive alternative to the terms minority, indigenous, immigrant, ethnic, and second or foreign language. Meanwhile, to refer to the same range of language resources in their national context, Australian policy and practice had been using the term community language.
Motivation in Raising Children Bilingually

There have been discussions on motivation for learning second or foreign language presented by researchers, and a few study on parents’ motivation for wanting their children to be bilinguals.

Engin (2009) in his study about language learning motivation discusses that there is an integrative motivation that begins with a personal effort and continues on with a desire to know the target language’s native speakers, to learn something new, while instrumental motivation is described in association with a pragmatic purpose for language learning where student would study hard to receive high marks. In this paper, the instrumental motivation that is shown by parents can be understood as a pragmatic purpose for their children bilingual ability so that their children would receive better benefits in the future, including better opportunity in the job market.

Bernard Weiner (1992 in Dörnyei 2003) argues that as we attribute our past successes and failures, we extensively shape our motivational disposition, which is known as the attribution theory. In addition, Graham and Weiner (1996) explained attribution theory in relation to person’s desire to understand the causal relationship of their experiences, which affects the expectations and in turn influences the motivational variables.

Describing motive as a stable personality trait and motivation as a tendency aroused by a specific situation, Heckhausen, Schmalt, & Schneider (1985) proposed that there are two motives exist; they are the motive to approach success and the motive to avoid failure. An investigation by McClelland and Liberman in 1949 concluded that the motivation of the subjects with medium achievement motive was directed mainly toward the avoidance of failure, and the motivation of the subjects with high achievement motive focused more on the attainment of success (Heckhausen, Schmalt, & Schneider, 1985). Some parents’ past experiences, either good or bad which can be understood as success or failure, make these parents have the strong motivation to raise their children bilingually.

Schecter, Sharken-Tabaoda, and Bayley (1996) discussed the motivations that parents had in raising children bilingually, where in the context of the study, English is the dominant language and Latin is the second. In describing the motivations that these parents had, they categorized motivation into two groups, namely societal rationales and personal rationales. The first category comprises cultural pluralism and political issue, while the second includes instrumental motivation, group identity, and strengthening ties with family.

This cognitive benefit is also discussed by King and Foggle (2006) in their study on parents who raise bilingual children, which revealed that many parents believed that their children would benefit cognitively from being bilingual. Although in the fact, research suggests advantages only in very specific areas, those parents in King and Fogle’s study, as well as Tari in this study, believe that children bilingualism will make children smarter overall.
3. Methods

As a part of a bigger research discussion, this paper obtained the data from the collected data for the bigger research. As a qualitative study, the research views the topic through the parents’ points of view and presents the discussion on the parents’ experiences, which constructs an understanding of the phenomena. Qualitative research, understands the phenomenon from participants’ perspectives instead of that of the researcher (Merriam, 1998). The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, because the media is the researcher herself. “Meaning is embedded in people’s experiences and this meaning is mediated through an investigator’s own perceptions” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). The researcher is an active learner who tells the story from the participants’ view, instead of viewing phenomena as an expert who passes judgment on participants (Creswell, 1998).

The researcher interviewed seven participants from seven immigrant families who live in Melbourne Australia. With English as the formal and dominant language spoken by the society, the families apply their own family language policy in using the heritage language and were involved in unique experiences about raising children bilingually. Names used in this paper are pseudonyms. This is to maintain the privacy of the participants.

Why Parents Want Their Children to be Bilinguals?

In this section, the researcher describes why parents decided to raise their children bilingually. Information about family background and their children’s age and schooling is also provided to give the readers an understanding of the family context. At the end of this section, I give further description about my family and the reason I want to raise them bilingually.

Fatema’s Family

Fatema, who was an English teacher in her country of origin, and Aidin, who was an Math teacher, have to return to their country on the completion of their studies in Australia. They came from Saudi Arabia in 2009 when their sons were three and five years old to continue their study to the Masters degree in education and now to doctorate level. Their sons did not speak English when they first came to Australia, but started to speak English after only three or four months in their kindergarten. After the three-month adjustment period, Abdurrahman and Zayd started to speak English confidently. While the children always speak English outside home, Fatema and her husband insist on speaking Arabic to the children at home. Another means of exposure to Arabic is the television. The children watch the Arabic channel and they have no difficulties in understanding the language.

The reason Fatema and her husband always speak in Arabic to their children at home is for maintaining the culture and the language. Fatema considers that they need to maintain the ‘balance of the language’ which means that there is an equal ability of both languages. The children are expected to know the convention and the vocabularies of both languages with the same level so that they will always find the equal words when they need to switch the language they are using. Although realizing that this is very difficult, Fatema expects that Abdurrahman and Zayd have the same level of proficiency both in English and Arabic. Fatema believes that for the purpose of communication, the ability to speak Arabic is
beneficial for the children in times when they go to Saudi Arabia and talk to people who do not speak English. So Fatema makes her children aware about this by telling them who understood well about this.

Fatema had been brought up bilingually herself. Spending some years in the United States, she spoke English and Arabic very well and felt that she has the understanding of the two cultures. It was a positive point and she wants her children to experience the same. She wants her children to be able to see things from the two ways of thinking because using English means different way of thinking that when people use Arabic. This is believed to enrich the children’s ability. She also believes that cognitively, children are trained to do more, which means more exercise for the brain, which is believed to help develop intelligence.

So it is seen that for Fatema, the main purpose of maintaining the Arabic language with her children is for maintaining the Arabic language itself and upholding the culture, in order for the children to be able to communicate with their relatives in Saudi Arabia, as well as to maintain the balance of two languages. Another reason is the cognitive concern, which considers the cognitive better ability.

Oxana’s Family

Coming to Australia for the first time in 2002 to study, Oxana went back to Russia, her home country, in 2005 before she and her husband came again as skilled migrants. Giving birth to her daughter Marina in Australia, Oxana has a number of reasons for raising her daughter bilingually. Oxana did not have many Russian friends in Australia before Marina was born because she was happy to be friends with people from a wide range of different background and country. However, this changed since Marina was born, when Oxana and her husband wanted to create a Russian-speaking environment for her because she had read about the benefits of bilingualism in children.

Oxana’s main reason for keeping her heritage language with Marina is for the communication with people in Russia and people from Russia in Australia. The family keeps contact with their family in Russia by talking on skype several times a week, so she wants Marina to be able to talk to relatives and their friends in Russia. This motivation is caused by her own experience of losing her father’s heritage language, Kome, a language in a remote part of northern Russia, which is now not spoken by many people. Her father spoke Kome to his parents when they were alive but no one spoke the language to Oxana and her siblings. So Oxana and her siblings are not able to speak Kome because no one encouraged them doing so. The loss of Kome in her family becomes her biggest concern and main reason for maintaining Marina’s heritage language, Russia.
Oxana strongly believes that it is important to maintain heritage languages. She considers that Kome, the indigenous language, is disappearing, for what she feels very disappointed that she did not learn it when she was a child. When her grandmother died, no one could speak to her grandfather except her father, while her grandmother started forgetting Russian when she was eighty as it was not her mother tongue. Often times they had to wait until her father came home from work to have a conversation with her grandmother. Oxana was very disappointed and angry about the situation, and she does not want the same thing happen to Marina with Russian language, and she considers it a must that Marina is able to talk to her grandparents in Russian.

The second reason for Oxana wanting Marina to be bilingual is to give Marina choices for the future. Oxana believes that when her daughter has grown up, she will have the choice she will make, as what she says in the following:

... the second reason was that she feels she makes her choice. So she will know Russian but when she is 16 and if she doesn’t want to learn it anymore, she makes a choice. When they’re born, they can’t make choice. So I made this choice for her.

Although her daughter started to speak late, Oxana acknowledges the benefits of bilingualism and this is why she believes that it is good for her daughter. Oxana was once in doubt whether she has done the right thing by exposing Marina in two languages, but later she understood that what delayed Marina’s speaking was an aspect of physical development where she had interdental lisp, not because of a developmental problem, Oxana now has no doubts about implementing bilingualism with her daughter. She believes that people who speak more than one language are more intelligent, because people who can understand two culture, two linguistic systems, two ways of thinking, and because there is more for their brains to process.

Oxana also considers multi-lingual people can be more respectful to other people from other countries. She projects that Marina is not going to live in a small village so she has to be ready. Nowadays, people live in globalized era where they might live in places other than their home country and speak languages other than their first languages.

Above all the above reasons, Oxana thinks that even if she had not had the experience of losing Kome, she would still believe that language is an important aspect of identity. She needs to be able to speak Russian if she wants to identify herself as Russian. Besides that, the young generation needs to be able to speak the language in order to respect the older family members. It is unreasonable to expect Marina’s grandparents to learn English in their old age; it is the young generation, which is Marina, who should learn their language at young age.

So for Oxana, maintaining the Russian language is important to maintain the heritage language, for brain development and for communication with the extended family.
Tari’s family

An Indonesian, Tari, is married to James who has Dutch origin who does not speak the language. Tari speaks Bahasa Indonesia fluently and speaks it with their children. Their sons, Zack, who is four and Jake, who is six, understand Bahasa Indonesia completely although they speak English in the daily communication.

Tari strongly believes that people should not lose the language of their ancestors and this idea motivates her to communicate in Bahasa Indonesia with her children. She considers it disappointing that her children cannot learn Dutch from their father and does not want the same happen with Bahasa Indonesia. Ami also believes that for the purposes of communicating with people in their parents’ home country, children must be able to speak the language people speak.

Amazed by her son’s language development, Tari shared her experience of witnessing her first son spoke Bahasa Indonesia after several days of staying in Indonesia when he was about three years old. He communicated well with relatives and people in the country, and Tari was convinced that bilingualism had given this benefit of intelligence to receive inputs in two languages, and although at one time the child only use one language, the other language is saved and will be used when needed.

The advantage of being bilingual becomes a powerful motivation for Tari. She is convinced that being able to speak different languages is beneficial for children, in terms that they tend to be more intelligent. This also motivates her to encourage her friends who come from a non-English language background to do the same with their children. She believes that all languages are good; in fact she would speak one of the ethnic languages in Indonesia, Javanese, which her late mother spoke, if she could. She also would encourage her husband to speak Dutch if he could. She believes that bilingualism in any language is beneficial for children in that bilingual children tend to be more intelligent.

So the two reasons that Tari has for maintaining the heritage language with her children is for the communication with people in the home country as well as for the cognitive benefits where children tend to be more intelligent by speaking more than one language.

Merry’s Family

Merry who is originally Cambodian came to Australia when she was twelve. Having three children, a six-year old, a fourteen-year old, and a sixteen-year old, Merry speaks Cambodian with them. She wants her children to be bilingual; and not only bilingual in English and a language they learn at school, but she also wants them to be able to speak Cambodian as their heritage language for the reasons of culture and identity.

With her first two daughters, Merry does not speak Cambodian very often now. They have chosen to learn languages other than Cambodian as their second languages, and although there is a Cambodian school which holds classes once a week which they can join, they do not want to go. Merry is disappointed that her first two daughters have stopped using Cambodian.
Merry used to communicate in Cambodian with all her children when they were very young, before they started attending childcare, where they were exposed to English. With her third daughter, Merry still maintains exposure to the language through watching Cambodian movies and listening to Cambodian music together and she can see her daughter loves doing this. As a result, she has maintained receptive skills in Cambodian. Unlike her older sisters, Merry’s third daughter wants to go to Cambodian school and Merry plans to enroll her next year.

Merry wants her children to speak their heritage language, and being bilingual in English and a language other than Cambodian is not what Merry wants to see happen with her children. For the reason of communication, she does not want her children to not be able to speak Cambodian to Cambodian relatives and when visiting Cambodia. In addition, she wants her children to understand the culture which is embedded in the language, because she believes that children will value things when they know the meaning. Although she agrees that learning any language must stimulate the brain, she insists that being able to speak Cambodian is crucial because it is about identity.

It’s identity thing for me. And when they don’t speak Cambodian, there are things that.....the way we brought up, the way we raises is in the Cambodian language way. And if they don’t have that language, it’s hard for me to enforce that. I will say things in Cambodian, it doesn’t mean anything to them. But if they know, they would value that. ... So for me it’s an identity thing. Yeah okay in terms of cognitive thing, cognition, okay, that ... as long as they have another language, it must trigger that part of their brain. ... But in terms of identity and culture, they lost that. For me it’s an identity thing.

Merry, feeling that she made mistakes with her first two daughters, wants her third daughter to keep her Cambodian language. This becomes a very strong motivation for Merry to maintain Cambodian language with her children. She does not want them to lose their heritage cultural identity.

Nejma’s Family

Nejma and her family came to Australia in 2008 from Iraq as refugees. With the situation at that time, they came to Australia to find peace and feel safe. Two of Nejma’s sons (eleven and eight years old) were born in Iraq and did not speak English when they came to Australia. Her youngest son is now three and was born in Australia. The first language the children spoke was Iraqi Arabic.

The family was pushed to leave their home country because of war five years ago, and Nejma said that they have paid the price for having security and a better life in Australia. She expressed her sadness that their children do not like their heritage culture anymore; the children are reluctant to speak the language. She has to face that their children have lost their identity as Iraqis. Although Nejma and her husband encourage their children to love their parents’ home country, the children especially the first and second sons don’t like Iraq because they saw the war. Iraq reminds them of the traumatic memories.
At home now, Nejma and her husband encourage their children to use Arabic. Her husband often reminds everyone to speak Arabic at home. Nejma and her husband encourage the children to visit Iraq so that they know their homeland, and for that reason, plus the fact that the family also keeps contact with the family in Iraq through phones and skype, they need to be able to speak Arabic.

The importance of bilingualism for communication becomes the focus for Nejma that she wants her children to be bilingual. In Iraq, the ability speaking English is a great benefit because the globalization today. In Australia, speaking Arabic as their heritage language is expected for maintaining their identity as Iraqis, as well as for communication with family in Iraq.

**Tamina’s Family**

Tamina’s family is originated from Iran. Both Tamina and her husband were brought up bilingually by their parents. Her daughter Linna is now exposed to Persian (or Farsi) at home, because the experience of being bilingual was a positive one both for Tamina and her husband.

One of Tamina’s reasons for maintaining the heritage language with her daughter is her intention to maintain the heritage culture. She wants that her daughter to be familiar with Persian culture and values, so she gets as much access as possible to her heritage and background. Although the culture that Linna will adapt is not the pure Persian culture because they live in Australia, Tamina acknowledges that. She considers that Linna might have what she calls ‘hybrid identity’ which comes from both Persian and Australian culture.

Another strong reason is the critical thinking that bilingual children have. Experiencing it herself, she believes that the benefits of being bilingualism include ‘being different’ which indicates the strength in characteristic and intelligence. In her childhood, the strength came from the ‘two worlds’ that she embraced, the world with English as the language of communication, and the world with Persian. This is what she wants happen to Linna, and she wants her daughter recognizes that she understands both worlds and respect them.

It can be said that the reason for Tamina to communicate bilingually with her daughter is to maintain the Persian culture and to develop an understanding of two worlds, besides the fact that she also believes that bilingualism stimulates intelligence.
**Urmila’s Family**

Urmila and her husband both have always been interested in bilingualism. Originated from Bangladesh, this family has twin daughters, Manisha and Medini. These children go to a bilingual school where the other language is Japanese, so basically the children speak three languages: English, Bangladesh and Japanese.

Urmila wants to maintain Bangladesh as their heritage language in her children because of some reasons. She considers that bilingualism, or multilingualism gives her children more options because language skills can open opportunities for advanced study and better jobs in the future. Bilingualism in children gives benefits for the children in the future.

She believes that her children have to know the traditions, customs, and beliefs of their heritage wherever they are. Another reason for maintaining heritage language is for the communication purpose. The children need to be able to speak Bengali because many people in Bangladesh do not speak English. Similar to Tari’s experience with her first son, Urmila witnessed her children used Bengali during their visit to Bangladesh, which indicated that they communicated well in the language with all their relatives. The other occasion when Manisha and Medini speak Bengali very well is when they have the family gathering in Australia; her daughters will speak Bengali the whole time with very young children who have not gone to school yet. So Urmila is convinced that the strategy of speaking Bengali to the children and ask the children to speak the language as hard as they can is a good way because she believes that inside, the children know the language and they will produce it when needed.

In short, Urmila also wants their children to be multi-lingual because of benefit for her children’s future. She wants her children to maintain Bengali as their heritage language because she wants them to maintain Bangladesh culture as well as for communication with the extended family and other people in Bangladesh when they visit the country.

**4. Discussion**

There are several reasons why parents want their children to be bilingual. I would group the motivation that are shown by the parents into the following: cultural reason to maintain heritage culture, instrumental motivation which aims at children’s future success in the job market, knowledge-based motivation which comes from the parents’ understanding about the cognitive benefits obtained by bilingual children, motivation to attain success which comes from positive experience in the past, and the motivation to avoid failure due to personal experience with the family language loss. Detailed discussion is presented in the following section.
Maintaining the Legacy

The intention to maintain heritage culture becomes one of the reasons, because parents believe that being bilingual is not only a matter of speaking two languages, but also being attached with the cultures of the languages one is speaking. For the parents, it means maintaining “ties to the parents’ heritage language and culture” (King and Fogle, 2006b, 1). Maintaining the language will lead to maintaining the cultural identity as “identity is language to a large degree” (Gibbons & Ramirez, 2004, p. 197).

To cultivate the heritage culture to the children, it is essential that parents encourage children to not only use the language but also get involved in the cultural or family activities. The understanding of the heritage culture as the second culture needs the help of other people especially the parents and the support of the society (Cunningham, 2011).

The emerging issue about having two cultures at the same time is the problem of “double identity”(Beardsmore, 1986), which is often defined as personal disorientation, anxiety, and social isolation. Child (1943) in his study on Italian immigrants to New York found out that they often revealed symptoms of bewilderment and frustration which is caused by the conflict of loyalties and aspirations generated between the home language and culture and the language and culture of the outside world. This conflict often needed to be solved by making a choice. Although this does not seem to happen with the children of the participating parents, parents should be aware of it.

The issue of heritage cultural identity, which is expected to be achieved through the heritage language use as in Merry’s family, has been raised in order for the children to have the sense of the heritage culture. This will mean that children are expected to have two cultural identities, although bilingualism is not equivalent with biculturalism (Grosjean, 2010). The parents in this study expect that their children have their heritage cultural identity. Biculturalism leads to the issue of “bicultural’s identity,” (Gorsjean, 2010, p. 116). These parents expect that their children have bicultural identity in the frame of not losing their original identities, when blended with the second culture in which they live today and which might actually be dominant in the children’s lives. They expect this to happen until their children become adults, when these children will take part in the life of the two cultures, adapt –at least in part– their attitudes, behavior, values, and languages to their cultures, and combine and blend aspects of the cultures that are involved (Gorsjean, 2010).
Maintaining legacy is also about preventing the heritage language loss. Although at this time it does not happen as the same situation which occurred in the subtractive bilingualism where the speakers “lose language competence in the first language” (Lambert, 1974, in Chin & Wigglesworth, 2007) which is “replaced by the second language” (Cummins, 1976 in Chin & Wigglesworth, 2007), in Oxana’s family, the effort to maintain Russian as the first language is the effort to prevent Marina from losing it after she acquires English as the second language which will soon replace Russian and become her dominant language as the “balance effect” (Macnamara, 1966), which Oxana assumes to happen after she starts schooling.

Heritage language loss can also happen because there is no one in the family speaks the language. The loss in the family setting have the potential of losing the language in the wider context, which is in the social cultural setting, as Oxana has worried about. Oxana’s experience of losing her father’s heritage language, Kome, shows an extinction of a language in a family setting, which is considered as a failure. Oxanathinks that Kome language is diminishing now even in the wider context, and she feels very disappointed that she did not learn it when she was a child. This worry has given her a strong motivation as an “avoidance of the failure”(Heckhausen, Schmalt, & Schneider, 1985) to maintain Russian with her child.

**Benefits to the Children**

Many parents believe that raising children bilingually helps develop the children’s intelligence. Studies conducted by Bialystok (1986, 1999), Bialystok & Martin (2004), Bialystok, Luk& Kwan (2005), Bialystok &Viswanathan (2009)and Barac& Bialystok (2012) confirmed that bilingual children showed better performance in various tasks compared to monolinguals. Bilingual children are able to develop the ability to solve problems that contain conflicting clues at an earlier age as well as to focus on what is relevant while ignoring distraction because their brains’ work involves the ‘executive control’ (Bialystok, 2009, 2011). This is in line with Layra-Ann Petitto and Kevin Dunbar’s study (2004) that being bilingual helps the bilingual to be a better “multi-tasker.”

Diamond (2006) explains that the ability to stay focus or inhibition works together with the cognitive flexibility which enables the bilingual children to flexibly switch perspectives, focus of attention, and response mapping, as well as with the ability to hold information in mind and operate it, which is called working memory, although a study conducted by de Abreu (2011) revealed that bilingual mind has little effects on the development of working memory.

As it is investigated by King & Fogle (2006), where parents believe in the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, Tari also considers that bilingual children become more intelligent overall. Another benefit which can be considered as the instrumental motivation for raising children bilingually is the opportunity created for children’s future. Many parents in this study, as also parents in Schecter and Sandra’s (1996) study consider that bilingual children have more opportunities in the world. They consider that bilingualism enables children to be more competitive in the future, including job market.
Communication with people in Parents’ Home Country

A communication reason is one of the strong motivations for parents raising their children with the heritage language. Parents consider that the ability to speak the heritage language is crucial for children in order to maintain communication with the parents’ extended family in the home country, relatives in Australia and friends in Australia who come from the same home country. Arguing that the children will need to use their heritage culture when visiting their home country, these parents emphasize it in order to make their children get the idea. The intention is also to avoid their children feeling like foreigners or being perceived by others as foreign in the home country (Cunningham, 2011), which happens to Tari.

The positive experience of using the heritage language by the children that happened to Urmila’s and Tari’s family, where the children can actually use the language properly to communicate, has strengthened parents’ intention of making their children able to speak the heritage language properly. The success of making their children enable to switch the language into the heritage language when they are in the context where the language of communication is the heritage language is relieving because “their hard work and that of their parents are seen to be worthwhile” Cunningham (2011, p. 67).

Parents’ Experience Being Brought-up in Bilingual Context

Some parents had the positive experience of being brought up bilingually by their parents, and expect to extend the positive feelings of being brought up with more than one language to their children. These parents, who in their childhood spoke their heritage language and English, now consider that bilingualism gives many benefits to them, some of which are the way of thinking in two different ways, and the ‘power’ that a child can obtain. They expect to share this positive experience to their child. The exposure to “two worlds” (Tamina-parent) or “double reality” (Oxana-parent), the world of the child’s languages, which is English that is used mostly at schools and among children in Australia, and the world of another language, which is the language of the parents that is used mostly at home and within the cultural community of the parents is considered a positive childhood experience. It leads to parents’ enthusiasm to expose their children to both worlds and to understand that their mother understand and respect those worlds. Parents’ understanding of the worlds of their children supports their development and makes them aware that their parents care about them and respect their choice. This is also done in the hope that the child will develop positive attitude towards life in general and towards world’s languages and their cultures in specific.

No Confusion in Bilingual Child

Parents involved in this study believe that being bilingual or multi-lingual will not confuse children; a child will not get confused because of the use of two languages or more in his or her life. Children who mix or switch between languages do not indicate that they are confused. King and Fogle (2006b) argue that language mix or switch in bilingual children shows mastery of two linguistic systems in the child. The child is able to separate the two languages very early in the development (Genesee, 2002 in Genesee, 2008). Genesee (2006) also argues that it is an effective communication strategy because the
children who mix languages do so to find solution on the lack of sufficient vocabulary in one of the languages and so they borrow from the other language.

Susanne Dopkein video “Growing up with English plus” (1999) explains that any language problem that is undergone by children is never caused by bilingualism. This is supported by a study by J. Paradis (Grosjean, 2010) on the errors made by seven-year-old bilingual and monolingual children on specific language impairment (SLI) disorder. The study found the same deficit patterns in both groups and concluded that bilingual language learning does not appear to interfere with the overall course of language acquisition (Grosjean, 2010).

However, Oxana’s doubt whether it was good to expose young children with two languages might be the doubts of many other parents. The question of whether children will get confused might always emerge among parents who want to raise their children bilingually. Oxana’s experience with her daughter’s interdental lisp has proved her that bilingualism does not cause language impairment, and she does not doubt anymore.

5. Conclusion

Cultural, cognitive advantage and future benefit, communication, parents’ experience and language ability reasons have become the main motivations for the parents to raise their children bilingually. The findings have shown that among several reasons for parents raising their children bilingually in Australia, the intention to maintain the heritage culture and cultural identity, to which parents associate language with, is very important. Not only the cultural reasons to impose cultural identity, the communication motivation to maintain communication with the home country also become very significant motivations for parents to maintain the heritage language with their children.

The other reasons are for attaining the benefit for their children in relation to cognitive development, and the instrumental motivation involving parents’ hope for their children’s future opportunity and benefits in the job market. A motivation to avoid failure, which emerges from the bad experience such as the family language loss also base parents’ family language policy on the heritage language maintenance.

Motivation such as the belief of children high intelligence and the absence of language confusion in bilingual children has also make parents want to raise their children bilingually. This, along with the parents’ positive experience with their own bilingualism in their childhood has become a strong intrinsic motivation.
References


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