
The Benefits and Challenges of Bilingual Education

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United States (US) is multilingual communities, because US including Americans and large amount of immigrants. The immigrants from all over the world and speak different languages. The languages including of Chinese, Japanese, French, and Spanish spread into US. According to latest Census Bureau data, there are more than 50 million immigrants in US (Camarota, 2012). In other words, immigrants increasing could lead to languages diversity in the US. In addition, US schools use English as the medium instruction because English is dominant language in the US. In contrast, some schools apply two languages to educate the children, which is Bilingual education. Also, US schools are tried to achieve No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The NCLB require all the students to take standardized tests in English and in the same condition. This act against bilingual education, schools force students study English only and pass English exam (math, science etc). Some places in the US implement bilingual education (dual language immersion program), but not all the people (teachers/parents/education department) agree and support bilingual education. In parents' opinion, they like their children to learn more than one language, because the children grow up with two languages, which is having more opportunities for career and maintain first language (L1). In contrast, some parents do not like bilingual education. They think their children should only learn the dominant language (English), because the parents think English is the language of doctors and lawyers (Malkin. 1996). The parents believe their children can be doctors or lawyers if they only learn English. In teachers' opinion, educate children being a bilingual is not easy. Teachers against the bilingual education program, because teacher seems the students are not able to speak, read and write in English after finish the program. The teachers know the program is not working; the program cannot balance two languages in the classroom. According to San Jose Mercury News (1997), teachers pointed out

bilingual education program was native language education. Teachers spent class time to teach a subject as well as the language(English), children learn it but rarely to use the language(English). Teachers argued how the children learn a language by not using it (Lasken.1997). In children' opinion, they understand L1, but they still prefer to speak and use dominant language is mostly. Everybody has diversity of opinions for bilingual education. With these opinions, there are many questions, such as what are the challenges and benefits for bilingual educations. In this library research, I want to answer the following questions: 1, **what are the benefits of bilingual education?** 2, **what are the challenges for children, teachers and parents?** 3, **How to promote bilingual education in schools?**

What are the benefits of bilingual education?

As we know some benefits are such as communication and job opportunity. In addition, bilingual children have high academic achievement and cognitive ability is higher than monolingual children. Lauchlan, Parisi and Fadda (2012) and Wallstrum (2009) applied some tasks to test the bilingual children had high academic achievement and some area (cognitive and math) developed better. Lauchlan, Parisi and Fadda (2012) conducted the four tests which were block design, digit span forwards, vocabulary and arithmetic. The participants were 121 children included 62 bilingual and 59 monolingual children during November 2009 to February 2010. Bilingual children spoke Gaelic and English; monolingual children spoke either English only or Italian only. The condition was no difference between age and sex. Lauchlan et al. (2012) analyzed the result was bilingual children significantly outperformed monolingual children, because bilingual children scored higher than monolingual children. Four tests were combined with different areas, such as math, non-verbal tasks and cognitive ability. The tests (block design and vocabulary) also called cognitive ability sub-tests. It means bilingual children's cognitive ability was higher than that of monolingual children. From the score, it can see bilingual children develop better in math and cognitive development. Lauchlan et al.

(2012) argued the bilingual children should be proficient in two languages, and then they were able to finish the four tests with high scores. In contrast, bilingual children did not have equally high proficiency in two languages; it will be like the monolingual children. Because monolingual children are only proficient in one language.

There are many authors who have argued that bilingual children have high achievement. Porter (1999) has analyzed bilingual children and found higher academic achievement and higher self-esteem in the bilingual schooling. The target students were proficient in Spanish, the school provided English Immersion class for the students. Porter (1990) found out the target students learn English very quickly and were able to use English in other subjects. Being balanced in two languages or having equal proficiency in two languages is a prerequisite to bring students into high achievement in school.

In addition to the high academic achievement and cognitive ability development, Wallstrum (2009) pointed out some benefits of dual language education, such as biliteracy, bilingualism and academic. Bilingual children were able to talk two languages about the same thing/object. Wallstrum (2009) conducted a watershed study which was bilingual children in Canada to take cognitive tests, verbal and nonverbal tests. The results also showed bilingual children were more intelligent. Besides the scores were significantly higher than monolingual children, the bilingual children use language to process the tests and classify the words. It said that the bilingual children's cognitive flexibility was more than monolingual children. Another study was Spanish and English dual language program in Washington. Students studied Spanish from grade one to six, teacher given thirty minutes to one hour instruction during the class. It stated students were fast learners in a new foreign language (Spanish) and sounded fluent in both languages (English and Spanish). Bilingual children are fast language learners. But children could be a native English speaker or proficient in English. The students are learning Spanish quickly in school. Students from grade one to six, it is a critical period time. According to Hakuta,

Bialystok, and Wiley (2003) analyzed children learn language faster during the critical period time. It is prime time to develop linguistic knowledge. However, children learn language after critical period time would be less successful. Bilingual education program is more successful in elementary schools. Integrated the above the benefits of bilingual education, it seems children benefit from bilingual education. Bilingual children cognitive/biliteracy/academic ability was higher than monolingual children. Bilingual children cognitive development is better than monolingual. The tests scored higher than monolingual children. In general, bilingual children performed better than monolingual children.

What are the challenges for children, teachers and parents?

Bilingual children are performed better than monolingual children; bilingual education program is beneficial to children. However, there are some challenges for children, teacher and parents. Schools may not have enough bilingual teachers to educate the children. In teachers' point of view, balanced two languages, good literacy in two languages could be challenges. According to Schwartz, Mor-Sommerfeld, and Leikin (2010) mentioned one of the biggest challenges for teachers is run the bilingual education program without professional training. The teachers without professional training, they rely on their experience and wondering to teach the children. Teachers have no idea what approach or theories conduct into the program. However, teachers with professional training, they know how to deal with cross-linguistic transference. And apply what theory into the classroom is more effective. Teachers without professional training, everything depends on their previously experience and instinct. For instance, some content translate from L1 to second language, it is rely on the previously experience. But it is not appropriate for children to understand. Teachers lack of training chance because the schools do not have enough human resource and funding to support it. Schwartz (2013) analyzed the challenges of bilingual education program; teachers have hard time to negotiate two languages. Teachers have to maintain L1 in the class as well as make sure teaching second language. Teachers

should use code-switching in appropriate time; students will understandable and have attention to keep learning in the class. If the teachers not consider to use code-switching, students would misunderstanding and no responses to the teachers/class. In general, human resource and funding is precondition to support bilingual education.

In children's point of view, they may unconscious using L1 all the time. For native English speaker, they have hard time to learn second language. Bilingual education is plan for immigration children to maintain L1 and develop second language. In US country, English is dominant language. Lindholm (2001) mentioned English only movement in the US and parents' attitude toward bilingual education. In 2000, English set as official language in the classroom, workplace, courtroom and so on. The movement against the immigration, the immigration children only can learn English and never had development in L1 at schools. It is similar to NCLB act; immigrant children only develop second language and take English type test for all the subjects. English proved bilingual education was not effective. Students spent time on two languages. The English proficiency and academic achievement did not achieve high level. Students spent time on L1 (non English). At that time, the US Education Department asked to see bilingual education was effective in each/every native English speaker. US Education Department argued bilingual education was ineffective in some course setting. Actually, teachers had hard time to organize the lesson between two languages. Besides teachers had hard time, the parents also had hard time. Lindholm (2001) stated parents had diversity of ethnicity, education, and language background. Some parents did not have chance to learn English, they feel like their children have to learn English first in the US. Some low income parents did not understand school system as well as the dual language program. Therefore, some parents do not allow children to enroll in dual language program. Also, they did not like to support this kind of program. Schwartz (2013) mentioned parents enrolled their children into bilingual education program (Chinese-English program),

parents wanted their children were able to communicate with them by using L1 (Chinese). The parents never use/speak English to their children at home; the children learn English time limited in class. Finally, children's English have no improvement. Parents think bilingual education is time consuming; their children should not enroll in bilingual education program. Teachers expressed parents never understand the bilingual education program setting and language policy in the classroom. This maybe the teachers and parents lack of communication. In other words, teachers lack of professional training and negotiate with two languages is challenges. Parents misunderstand the bilingual education program and they have diversity background. Children still prefer to use dominant language. Patrinos and Velez (2009) said bilingual education program cost more than regular school. Bilingual education program need more bilingual teacher and material to run on. In general, teachers' qualification, parents' misunderstanding and children preference (dominant language) and funding is challenges to run bilingual education program. Besides those challenges, there still have more and more challenges emerge.

How to promote bilingual education in schools?

Some challenges existing in dual language education, but still have some successful dual language education. Freeman (2000) mentioned Julia's dual language program, the program focused on low income children. The goal was students can communicate in English as well as able to read, write and speak Spanish. Julia had good literacy in both languages. If Julia only knows English, Julia works with a partner (Spanish speaker teacher). They both present two authentic languages to the students. In Julia class, students and teachers spent 30% of time on Spanish and 70% of time on English. The number of students was 20, it was small class. Students and teachers worked and interacted together in small group. Two important requirements for Julia's class, first was separate languages for different subjects (i.e., math and science used Spanish, social studies used English).

Second was the percentage of time spent on each language. Of course ideal time is 50-50, in Julia's class, they spent 30-70. Julia considered code switching from English to Spanish. Vocabularies appear during the class, Julia used code switch explained to the students. Freeman(2000) mentioned successful dual language education depended on teachers involvement and development. Teachers' qualification, time management and number of students are important factors to promote successful bilingual education. Williams (2006) mentioned parents' involvement and students' success is direct ratio. Some parents did not even know their children need to do homework and turned in next day of class. Parents made noisy (TV, computer, movie) environment at home which was affect students to do homework. Peceny (2010) suggested transitional bilingual education program. Peceny(2010) also mentioned parents need to collaboration with classroom teachers. Teachers needed to understand/know culture gap, teachers used effective strategies to help students improved comprehension. A successful bilingual education needs teachers, parents and students cooperation. Class time is not adequate for teachers and students. At this time, parents are played important role after school time to assistant their children at home. Michael, Andrade and Bartlett (2007) the success in bilingual education, first is the teachers use students' L1 as resource. In some interviews, native Spanish speakers said the teachers should learn Spanish. The native Spanish speakers said did not learn anything from the English teacher, because native Spanish speakers did not understand English. In contrast, the teachers speak Spanish, native Spanish speaker pay more attention in the class and more respect to the teachers. Teachers allow students use Spanish in an English class, and also make connection between English and Spanish. The native Spanish speaker feel more comfortable study English in the class, Second teachers and students maintain positive relationship. It is similar if the teachers are able to speak Spanish, the native Spanish speaker build relationship with teachers upon arrive at school. The students aren't afraid talk everything to teachers; teachers

know the where is problem/question. Teachers collaborate with students well in the classroom. Schools need to spend fund to hire bilingual teachers or hire half of English teachers and half of Spanish teachers. For parents against dual language program, schools do propaganda about students receives benefits of dual language program. Teachers strengthen communication with parents; make them feel positive about program. As much as possible help parents to understand the bilingual education program setting in classroom and language policy. To run a successful bilingual education program, teachers need professional training and use code-switching in appropriate time. The class size considers develop in small group, teachers can deal with each student. In addition, Parents need to assistant their children after school time; school time is not enough for students to develop two languages as well as the subject content. Schools consider use students' L1 as resource, make students familiar to school and teachers. Teachers building positive relationship with students, students feel comfortable to study in the school.

Conclusion

The case study proved students beneficial from bilingual education. Bilingual children performed better than monolingual children. Bilingual tests scores higher than monolinguals. Bilingual children have high academic achievement and some area develop better than monolinguals. The bilingual children seems have proficient in both languages, if the bilingual children only proficient in one language or not balanced in two languages, it is similar to monolingual children. In contrast, some challenges existing in the program because parents' background is different. Parents misunderstand the bilingual education program is time consuming. Parents do not assistant their children after school time. They think children's study is teachers' responsibility only. However, parents involve into bilingual education program to help teachers, children have more success in the class. School time is not sufficient to help students develop two languages and few subjects. People prefer and develop dominant

language. Dominant language use many areas, parents think dominant language (e.g. English) is language of doctors or lawyers. Parents like their children to learn dominant language is enough. At the end, teachers have challenges in bilingual educations. Some teachers may not know two languages and they do not know how to balanced two languages, because the teachers are lack of professional training. Teachers have no idea what strategy or theory conduct into bilingual education program. Teachers run bilingual education program rely on their previously experience. Teach bilingual education program and regular class is different. Although challenges still exist, however still have successful program. The example of Julia's class, they have clear goal for students, Julia considered the time and language for different subject/content. Some vocabulary is necessary to explain it, Julia switch language to explain to the children. It makes students clearly to understand the content. The class sizes develop into small groups, teachers easily to communicate with each student and work together. Parents' involvement help the bilingual education program, those successful tips can be reference for schools to promote bilingual education.

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