

Parental and Self-Motivation Affect Children's Bilingualism

Jiixin Ruan

University of Hawaii at Manoa

**Introduction:**

In recent days, many bilingual children are emerging. Many parents start to notice the benefits of being a bilingual. They try to use different approaches and methods to help their children become bilingual. Such as school training, one to one parent approach, home language only approaches, and etc. In immigrant family, many parents know that letting their children become bilingual is a bridge to help them connect with the social where majority language is not their native language. At the same time, it is important to them that their children able to speak their language, it builds up a good family relationship, and it is also important to build up a relationship with their heritage language culture. According to Baker (2007), “A bilingual child can become a bridge between generations” (p. 1). A bilingual child is just for having a good relationship between parents, but also other family member, such as grandparents and other relatives who cannot speak the child’s second language in their home country.

Although many parents start to notice the benefits of being bilingual, many other parents that are still believe being bilingual is shameful. Some of the parents do not want their children speak their home language because the parents were suffered from discrimination of speaking the minority language. There are also situations from social pressure that cause parents do not want their children speak or learn the language other than the majority language. Even the children are born in an immigrant family, and they have a great chance to expose to another language besides the majority language of the

society where they live, but because their parents do not want them to learn the language other than the majority language, the children lose most of their L1 competence or completely lose their L1.

These two extreme phenomenon that indicate above show the two different motivations that the parents have, high and low. Yet, sometimes, there are also have other two situations come up. When the parents have high motivation, but the children's motivation is low, and opposite, when the parents have low motivation, but the children's have high motivation. These two situations also affect the process of children become bilingual. In this way, no matter parents' motivation or children's motivation, they are all important for the process of children become bilingual. In this paper, I would like to discuss how the parents' and self-motivation affect the process of children become bilingual.

### **Self-Motivation in Language Learning**

According to Lightbrown (2006), motivation can have two sides, one is instrumental motivation and another one is integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation means that the learner is learning the target language for a specific goal, such as academic and communicative need. This motivation happens a lot in learning a foreign language or first generation of immigrant. For example, Chinese students in China want to do their best to learn English because they want to pass the college entrance exam. First generation immigrant wants to learn English because they want to able to communicate with the people in the society and get connection. Integrative motivation means that learner is learning the target language because they have a great desire to

enrich the target language culture and also personal interest. For example, a person who falls in love with Korean culture and language, he/she want to learn Korean and wish one day will live in Korea and enjoy the culture. She/he want to integrate in Korean culture and go to Korea for vocation every time if he/she able to offer. This two motivations play important role in language learning.

In language learning, motivation is a desire of achieving different goals of language proficiency. According to Gardner (1985), there are three aspects that indicate the individual difference of motivation in language learning, they are effort expended to achieve the goal, desire to achieve the goal, and attitudes toward the activity involved in achieving the goal (p.51). Different people have different goal in language learning. Students in ESL classroom have one goal is to achieve the academic proficiency and able to be success in school. Students in a foreign language classroom learning a language could be because they are really interested in the language and want to learn about the target language culture and knowledge. The goals are an important factor rise learners' motivation in language learning.

In Gardner's point, he argued that, motivation determine how much effort that the learner will put into language learning. An ESL student maybe will just put certain effort in language learning which help him/her achieve the academic need or he/she will put a lot more effort in language learning than others because he/she has higher goal than just academic need. A Chinese student who is in China force to get into an English tutor program may just put in a limited effort for passing the program, and wish not to get back to the program again. How strong your desire is in language learning will determine how much effort you will put in language learning, and the attitude toward language learning.

Different goals are not the only factor affect motivation. According to MacIntyre (2002), anxiety affection motivation, and motivation affect anxiety (p.64). MacIntyre also indicate different types of language anxiety, they are academic, cognitive, social, and personal anxiety. For academic anxiety, it often occurs in language classroom where students are so worry about their language grade. Because of the worry of grade, students start to feel upset and nervous. Gradually, they decrease the motivation in learning the language. Cognitive anxiety is link to academic anxiety which is positive. When the leaner so worry about the grade, he/she starts to increase the effort in language learning, and try to get a better grade next time. This happens a lot in English class in a foreign country. In China, a lot of excellent students they put more effort in studying English when they get the result they do not want. Many of them will choose to get into after school tutor program and try to get a better grade next time. Yet, at the same time, there are also students increase the anxiety and start to give up and afraid to go to school.

MacIntyre pointed out that social anxiety could be positive because it could facilitate language learning. Because of the worry of future communication in the target language society, people improve their motivation in language learning, and get into different course to study the target language. Yet, many people also argue that because of individual difference, the social anxiety could be in a different view too. According to Lightbrown(2006), social factor is more important affect motivation in language learning. The social power relation affects language learning. Children could achieve high proficiency in the target language, but because of the majority language power, they could refuse to speak the minority language in the society. For example, a Japanese child learnt Japanese from her parents but because of the living area where Japanese is rarely

spoken, she started to stop to use Japanese in social interaction. Sometimes, also because of ethnical identity, children do not want to learn the majority language in the society where they live. Learners who have fewer accents than others gain more respect and attention because they are being loyalty to their ethnic group. These issues decrease children's motivation in language learning.

### **The Role of Parents' Motivation in Children's Process of Become Bilingual and Social factor**

Parents play an important role in children's language learning. Many people pay attention in learner's motivation in language learning, but parents' motivation can also be an important factor affect children's language learning. Parents have the power to decide if the children become bilingual or not. In this point of view, the importance of parents' motivation is raised. In recent days, many parents realize the benefits of become bilingual. They want their children become bilingual. There are many different ways that they try to help their children become bilingual, such as sending them to language school, home language training, and etc. In immigrant family, many parents want their children able to speak their language because they need their children able to communicate with them and help them to connect to the society they are living now.

Yet, there are a lot of debates about bilingualism which can affect parents' motivation. According to Baker (2007), there are many issues about letting children become bilingual. Such as disagreement between family members, environment factor, parents' consideration about balance two culture, and social factors. Parents want their children become bilingual sometimes need to negotiate with family members. Sometimes,

grandparents may not want their children become bilingual. For example, a bilingual family which father speaks English and mother speaks Japanese; the child's grandparents believe that because he/she will rise in America, he/she should just learn English. Also because of the environments, parents also will take a consideration should the children become bilingual or not. The environment which majority of the language is English, there is lack of support to help the children develop its second or first language. In here, the parents need to consider how much effort they are willing to put in to help their children become bilingual. Yet, Baker (2007) also point out that, there are a lot of situation that bilingual children can occur, but the most important is parents' motivation (p.19).

Parents' motivation also could change because of their children. According to Barron-Hauwaert (2004), children started to lose their motivation when they started to go to school because of the peer effect. Although parents have high motivation, but their children do not want to speak to their parents in their first language when there are other people around. Parents sometimes also get confuse should they speak to their children in minority language because sometimes they cannot explain everything in the minority language. For example, parents cannot explain certain knowledge in the minority language to help their children do their homework.

Many of the immigrant parents do not want their children learn their language because of the social pressure and the consideration of the children's role of identity in the society. In Kremer-Sadlik (2005)'s paper, she pointed out that become bilingual is not the factor affect bilingual children become autistic, and parents should treat language as resource for their children. Many of the people believe that, the reason that cause many

bilingual children in immigrant family become autistic is because their home language. They argue that parents should only teach their children speak the majority language at home, even the parents are not good at the majority language.

In the case study from Kremer-Sadlik (2005), Chinese parents who are not good at English, but because they got suggest from clinician that being able to help their second son heal his autism, they should only speak English to him. Because of that, the parents decrease their motivation to teach their son speak Chinese, and only speak English to their son. Although their son wants to learn Chinese, the parents not allow him to speak Chinese. Gradually, their son lost his competency of Chinese. As Kremer mentioned that, it is great price to learn another language by giving up another language and the chance to build up a strong family relationship.

### **Research in Field (data still collecting)**

To see how parents' and self-motivation affect the children's process of become bilingual, I have created survey for bilingual speaker who are rise in America and who learn their L2 in their home country. The bilingual speakers I am going to give out the survey are from different age group, they are either college students or middle age worker. All of them have different experience in learning language in different situation. They speak Chinese, Japanese, and Korean.

### **Conclusion**

Language learning for Children is not just a decision by children themselves, but also a big decision by parents. Parents make a big decision if the children will become bilingual or not in their young age. Children's motivation in language learning give a big

effective in language achievement, but parents' motivation gives a big effective in the process of language learning. Parents' motivation determines how much effort they would invest in their children's language learning. Their decision helps their children whether being success in language learning.

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