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幼児の二言語習得：二言語の同時習得か、それとも 第一言語習得後に第二言語を学ばせるべきか

ロバート・ヒックリング*

Simultaneous Versus Early Sequential Bilingualism

Robert Hickling

要 旨 バイリンガルの子どもを持ちたいと望む親たちは、生後まもなく二種類の言語を子どもに学ばせるか (simultaneous bilingualism), それとも第一言語を確実に習得させてから、もう一つの言語を学ばせるか (sequential bilingualism), そしてもしもう一つの言語を後で学ばせるのであれば、何歳が子どもにとって適当であるか、という疑問に最初に取り組む。彼らのさらなる関心事は、単一の言語に接する子どもと比較して二言語に接する子どもは、話し始める時期が遅れるかどうかということである。もしそうであれば、長期的には、どんな影響があるかということ。その長期的な影響があるとすれば、二言語に接している子どもは、単一言語に接している子どもと類似した発達段階を通して二言語を習得するかということである。さらに、二言語環境の子どもは、単一言語環境にある子どもと同じ進度で、容易に二言語を習得するかということにある。

本稿は、simultaneous bilingualism と sequential bilingualism の2つのアプローチを考察し、バイリンガルの子どもを育てるには、両親の母国語、子どもが生活する環境における公用語、二言語環境下での子どもへの親の話し方、二言語環境下における個々の子どもの性格、という点について十分に配慮する必要があるということを明示している。同時に、日本に増加する国際結婚の家庭にあるような、両親がそれぞれ異なる言語を話し、そのうちの1つは、社会における公用語であるという環境下での simultaneous bilingualism を支持している。

Abstract

Many parents who wish their child to grow up bilingual first wrestle with the question of whether the two languages should be introduced from birth (simultaneous bilingualism) or whether the first language should be firmly established before exposing the child to the second language (sequential bilingualism) and, if so, what the optimal age should be before presenting the second language. Other concerns include whether the onset of speech will be delayed compared to the monolingual child and, if so, what long term effects, if any, it will entail, whether the child will progress through a developmental sequence that parallels that of his/her monolingual counterpart, and whether the child will acquire his/her languages with the same rate and ease as the monolingual child. This paper examines these two approaches to achieving bilingualism and presents evidence to suggest that careful consideration must first be given to such factors as the native language of the parents,

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the dominant language of the community, the strategy the parents employ in speaking to the child, and the individual personality of the bilingual-to-be child. An argument is then put forward in support of simultaneous bilingualism in the context where the parents have different native languages, one of which is the dominant language of the community, a situation in which a growing number of families in Japan find themselves.

Introduction:

It is possible for children to become bilingual following different courses of language acquisition. They may acquire their two languages at more or less the same time, or they may acquire one language before the other. The first route is known in the field as simultaneous acquisition, although there is not uniform agreement on the precise meaning of the word 'simultaneous'. For example, Swain (1972) calls the acquisition 'bilingualism as a first language'. Meisel (1990) refers to the idea of 'two first languages' or 'bilingual first language acquisition', McLaughlin (1978) proposes the idea that acquisition of more than one language up to the age of three be regarded as simultaneous. Padilla and Lindholm (1984) maintain a strict position that acquisition of two languages be considered simultaneous only when a child has been exposed to two languages from birth onward. For reasons which will be explained later, the criterion proposed by Padilla and Lindholm will be used to define simultaneous bilingualism in this paper.

The second route to bilingual acquisition is known as 'consecutive', 'successive', or 'sequential' bilingualism. Although the criteria for determining whether a language is 'acquired' are far from clear, most researchers generally accept that sequential bilingualism involves children who begin to learn a second language only after the age of three (Hakuta, 1986; McLaughlin, 1984; Taechner, 1983; Vaid, 1986). Since this paper focuses on early child language development, the term 'early sequential bilingualism' will be used to refer to the process of bilingual acquisition in which the second language is introduced at the age of three. Thus, the reasons for maintaining strict definitions for the two routes of bilingual acquisition are twofold. One is that anything a child learns in one language might affect the language learned later. The second is to enable adequate comparisons between the two processes.

In this paper, I will review the two approaches to achieving bilingualism and point out a number of critical factors which must be considered by the parents of would-be bilingual children. I will then present a scenario common to many mixed-marriage couples with children in Japan and explain why the simultaneous bilingual approach may be more effective than the early sequential bilingual approach.

Early simultaneous bilingualism

Establishment of early simultaneous bilingualism depends largely on the relation of the bilingual child's languages to his or her community. Vihman and McLaughlin (1982) distinguish between two basic environments —home and community— and between three types of language use: (1)

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each parent speaking his/her native language; (2) code-switching by both parents; and (3) an environment-bound language, with one language used in the home and the other in the community.

Romaine (1986) elaborates upon six basic types of early bilingual acquisition according to the native language of the parents, the language of the community, and the manner in which the parents address the child (see below).

Type 1: 'One Person—One Language'

Parents: The parents have different native languages with each having some degree of competence in the other's language.

Community: The language of one of the parents is the dominant language of the community.

Strategy: The parents each speak their own language to the child from birth.

Type 2: 'Non-dominant Home Language'/'One Language—One Environment'

Parents: The parents have different native languages.

Community: The language of one of the parents is the dominant language of the community.

Strategy: Both parents speak the non-dominant language to the child, who is fully exposed to the dominant language only when outside the home, and in particular, in nursery school.

Type 3: 'Non-dominant Home Language without Community Support'

Parents: The parents share the same native language.

Community: The dominant language is not that of the parents.

Strategy: The parents speak their own language to the child.

Type 4: 'Double Non-dominant Home Language without Community Support'

Parents: The parents have different native languages.

Community: The dominant language is different from either of the parents' languages.

Strategy: The parents each speak their own language to the child from birth.

Type 5: 'Non-native Parents'

Parents: The parents share the same native language.

Community: The dominant language is the same as that of the parents.

Strategy: One of the parents always addresses the child in a language which is not his/her native language.

Type 6: 'Mixed Languages'

Parents: The parents are bilingual.

Community: Sectors of the community may also be bilingual.

Strategy: Parents code-switch and mix languages.

Early sequential bilingualism

Not all bilingual children acquire their two languages in a simultaneous manner. In fact, most are members of linguistic minorities who acquire their first language in the home (and immediate environment) and their second language when they enter school. Other children become bilingual be-

cause their parents move to another country and find themselves in the situation of communicating with their parents in one language at home and the other in the community. Still others begin their bilingual experience after their first language has been firmly established as a result of a conscious decision on the part of the parents to do so.

Once the child's first language has been established, the second language can be introduced in a number of ways: The parent whose native language is the non-dominant language of the community could code switch and mix languages, eventually switching exclusively to his or her native language; both parents could code-switch and mix languages; or one or both parents could actively begin to 'teach' their child the second language in a formal classroom-like fashion.

Social and cultural setting and motivation

The social and cultural setting in which learners grow up determines their beliefs about language and culture and also the extent to which they hold positive attitudes towards the learning situation (Gardner, 1985). In monolingual settings such as Britain and the United States, many regard bilingualism as unnecessary and assimilation of minority cultures and languages as desirable. In contrast, in bilingual settings such as Canada both bilingualism and biculturalism may be encouraged. Language beliefs and attitudes both contribute to the learners' motivation, influencing both its nature (how integrative it is) and its strength.

In Gardner's model, motivation is seen as independent of language aptitude. It has a major impact on learning in both formal and informal learning contexts. Aptitude, on the other hand, is considered to be important only in the formal context, while playing only a secondary role in the informal setting. These two variables, along with intelligence and situational anxiety, determine the language behaviours seen in different learners in the two contexts and, thereby, learning outcomes. These can be linguistic (second language proficiency) and non-linguistic (attitudes, self-concept, cultural values, and beliefs). Learners who are motivated to integrate develop both a high level of L2 proficiency and better attitudes.

Motivation is an example of a factor that is clearly variable. The strength of an individual learner's motivation can change over time and is influenced by external factors. There is widespread recognition that motivation is of great importance for successful L2 acquisition, but there is less agreement about what motivation actually consists of. Motivation can be causative (i.e. have an effect on learning), resultative (i.e. be influenced by learning), intrinsic (i.e. derive from the personal interests and inner needs of the learner) and extrinsic (i.e. derive from external sources such as material rewards). It is generally agreed that the main determinants of motivation are the learners' attitudes to the target language community and their need to learn the L2. Motivation, so measured, affects the extent to which individual learners succeed in learning the L2, the kinds of learning behaviours they employ (for example, their level of participation in the classroom), and their actual achievement.

Both learners' attitudes and their affective states are subject to change as a result of experience.

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Both have a major influence on learning. For example, language aptitude is generally considered a stable factor, not readily influenced by the environment (Carroll 1981), while certain types of motivation are likely to change as a result of the learners' learning experiences. The general factors also vary according to the extent of the learners' control over them. For example, learners can do nothing about their age, but they may be able to change their learning style. Clearly, learners' beliefs and their affective responses to learning situations may be influenced by personality variables.

Age

There is a widely-held lay belief that younger L2 learners generally do better than older learners. This is supported by the critical period hypothesis, according to which there is a fixed span of years during which language learning can take place naturally and effortlessly, and after which it is not possible to be completely successful. Penfield and Roberts (1959), for example, argued that the optimum period for language acquisition falls within the first years of life, when the brain retains its plasticity. Initially, this period was equated with the period taken for lateralization of the language function to the left side of the brain to be completed.

In fact, however, children can become bilingual at any age, despite the long-standing myth that the earlier a language is acquired, the more fluent a person will be in it. In recent years, it has been determined that young children are rather unsophisticated and immature learners in that they have not yet fully acquired a number of cognitive skills, including the ability to abstract, generalize, infer, and classify, that could help them when it comes to learning a second language (see Krashen, 1973; Genesee, 1978; Seliger, 1978; McLaughlin, 1978). In addition, the notions of the critical period and of language lateralization have come under increasing scrutiny. For example, Krashen (1973) believes that language lateralization takes place at the age of four or five and not at puberty. Seliger (1978) maintains that there are different critical periods for different abilities which will determine how completely one can acquire some aspects of language. Despite the various debates and uncertainties concerning the impact that age has on the onset of bilingualism, there is agreement that age, in itself, is not the determining factor in language acquisition for either early simultaneous or early sequential bilingual children.

Language Choice

Another important factor in determining how successful a child is in acquiring two languages is how the parents address each other. The language choice of the parents may reflect certain attitudes towards the minority language and influence the child's own attitudes and subsequent use of his/her languages. Keilhöfer and Jonekeit (1983: 16) maintain that the interactive styles of the parents are likely to affect the way the child acquires his/her two languages. The emotional bond between child and parent is seen as having a major impact on the child's language development. If the child forges stronger ties to one parent than the other, then the language spoken by that parent will develop faster and stronger. This will no doubt be amplified if the majority language is the same as

the language spoken by the parent with whom the child identifies more strongly.

Other studies underline the importance of quality of input as opposed to quantity. Döpke (1992) found that the types of input and interactional strategies employed by parents provide evidence that interaction patterns can affect the development of individual structures. Döpke's study also underscores the role that fathers can play in their children's language development. In one case in which the child was successful in acquiring two languages simultaneously, the father not only talked to the child more than his mother did, but his interactions were more child centered and intensive than the mother's. It appears, therefore, that parents can have an impact on their child's bilingual development by providing a rich learning environment. However, the enormous amount of time and effort required in providing such an environment must not be underestimated. Sondergaard's (1981) attempt to raise his children bilingually in Finnish, his wife's native language, and Danish, his native language, in Denmark proved unsuccessful, due partly because monolingual Danish members of the family objected on the grounds that a bilingual upbringing would have adverse effects on the child's development. Saunders (1982) reported that even children within the same family may react differently to the attitudes of others. One of his sons ignored both covert and overt disapproval of German and spoke to his father in that language, irrespective of where they were or who was present. Another of his sons was much more sensitive and was reluctant to speak German at certain stages. His daughter, at age 3 : 4, refused to speak German at first when the family went to Hamburg for six months. She did not speak German to any adults except her father during her entire stay, including her kindergarten teacher. She did, however, interact in German with children at kindergarten.

Peer pressure and/or the desire not to be different may also lead children to reject their minority language. Meijers (1969) reported such an instance in his own grandchildren who spoke Dutch at home with their mother in England. The children told their mother not to speak to them in Dutch when their mother picked them up from school because the other kids thought it was silly.

Attitudes and Individual Personalities Affecting Bilingual Development

As stated earlier, the receptivity of the child and family towards bilingualism is a vital factor which must be carefully considered when attempting to raise a child bilingually. The interactional styles of parents also play a role. For example, it is not uncommon for parents who address their child in the minority language to accept replies in the dominant language. This often results in passive bilingualism, however, where the child is able to understand the minority language but is restricted in his/her ability to produce it. Attitudes of the extended family, the school and society at large are also important. What is essential in the maintenance of the minority language and thus the development of bilingualism is that the child feels the need to use the two languages in everyday life.

Simultaneous or Sequential Bilingualism?

Much of the information known about simultaneous bilingual acquisition comes from diaries kept by parents who raised their child bilingually, most often with the one person-one language strategy. Although such case studies are extremely informative, they vary widely in quality and reliability. Despite these failings, however, they are useful documents, and much of what is known about early childhood bilingualism is based on them.

In families where the one parent-one language principle has been adopted, the degree of success in bringing up the child to be bilingual depends on a number of factors, including whether the parents are consistent in their language use, the amount and more importantly the quality of exposure to the non-dominant language of the community, and the kind and amount of social support. Studies consistently show that, provided the first two conditions are met, the establishment of bilingualism is usually successful. However, the maintenance of the ‘foreign’ language, at an early age and later is shrouded in much less uncertainty. Some youngsters may not see the value in using the language of one parent once they become aware of the fact that he or she also speaks the language of the other and of the community at large. Furthermore, when the child becomes older, the input from the second language may become restricted, too limited in register and style, when compared to the rich stimulus provided by the outside community, for the two languages to develop in unison. In fact, bringing children up bilingually in this kind of setting requires considerable time, effort and creativity on the part of the parents (in particular the minority language parent), not to mention the expense of overseas trips, or the purchase of books, audio tapes and videos.

In families where a minority language is spoken by one (or both) of the parents, the successful development of bilingualism, whether achieved through a simultaneous bilingual upbringing or through an early sequential approach, will depend on the same considerations: exposure, consistency, perceived need and social support from both majority and minority communities.

It is quite clear now from the literature that, contrary to the results obtained from some researchers and the anxieties felt by many concerned parents, early simultaneous bilingualism does not result in a delay in the onset of the child’s first words, nor does it inhibit subsequent vocabulary development (Goodz, 1994). Although progress in the two languages is almost certain to be unequal, vocabulary development of young bilinguals in at least one language compares favorably with that of monolinguals (Brown, 1973). This can also be said of the acquisition of language structures (Goodz, Legare, & Bilodeau, 1987). With respect to questions of linguistic confusion and differentiation, it has been observed that most language mixing results not from confusion between the two languages, but from the need to borrow lexical items that have not yet been acquired in the language being spoken at the time of the mixing (Goodz, 1994). This is known in the field as “code-switching”, where the child is cognitively aware of the fact that he/she is borrowing a word or phrase from the other language. As far as the notion of semilingualism is concerned, most experts do not consider it to be a linguistic or scientific concept at all, but rather a political one. As long as

there is sufficient linguistic input from the environment (books, television, school, community) in the majority language, then one need not fear that exposure to a second language will impede the continued development of skills or lead to anything less than native competence in the majority language.

For those parents who must decide whether to expose their child to two languages from birth (simultaneous bilingualism) or delay the introduction of the second language (sequential bilingualism), such as is the case for many mixed marriage couples with children in Japan, the decision is often a difficult one. The overriding question lies in whether one approach is inherently superior to the other in terms of producing both a bilingual child and a well-adjusted child who accepts and benefits from his/her bilingualism.

There are a number of differences between simultaneous bilingualism and early sequential bilingualism, the most basic of which lies in the nature of child language acquisition. When children learn to speak, they learn to use language as a means of expression, communication and social contact. In addition to acquiring the formal aspects of a language, they are also learning to use language as a tool for understanding and manipulating the world around them. In other words, they are learning that language is necessary in order to form relationships with the people who surround them. First language acquisition thus differs from second language learning in that the young child experiences language use, for the first time, in a social context. This is true whether one or more languages is being acquired from birth. The learning processes involved in early sequential bilingualism can draw on the social and communicative experiences gained from the first language experience. On the one hand, this would appear to be an advantage enjoyed by early sequential bilinguals as language patterns and assumptions about language usage which have been acquired in the first language are likely to help the child when the second language experience begins, as the child will extend them by analogy. On the other hand, however, this habit may result in interference and frustration when the two systems diverge.

Zierer (1977) reports on a German-Peruvian child whose parents decided that they wanted their child to become bilingual in German and Spanish before entering school. In order to accomplish this, they decided to start with German, the minority language since they were living in Peru, and to wait at least two years before exposing their child to Spanish. They spoke German to each other and to the child, found him some German-speaking playmates and even asked the child's Peruvian grandmother not to speak Spanish to him. Two months before his third birthday, at which time his German had been firmly established, his parents allowed him to play with Spanish-speaking children. Within four months he had learned Spanish.

As far as early sequential bilingualism is concerned, it is unlikely to succeed unless parents take the kind of measures as reported by Zierer or if the family is not surrounded by a well-organized and fairly large minority community which enables the child to be exposed to the minority language both in and out of the home (see Grosjean, 1982: 174–75). Cases in which the majority language is first established before introducing the minority language have met with much less success, as the

child invariably lacks the motivation to use two languages in everyday life, having had all of his needs fulfilled by using just one.

Sociolinguistic studies of minority languages point to the difficulty children encounter in acquiring an active command of the non-dominant language where that language receives little or no support from the community. This is especially true in cases where only one parent in the home speaks the minority language. In such circumstances the child is capable of using the other language, but chooses not to. This is not to say, however, that success is necessarily out of the question (see Saunders, 1982; Döpke, 1992; Kielhöfer and Jonekeit, 1983; and Taeschner, 1993). One factor which all of these studies have in common is that the minority language was not stigmatized and the children came from an advantaged background.

Conclusion

From what is known about simultaneous and early sequential bilingualism, it is impossible to generalize that one strategy is better than the other in terms of producing bilingual, socially-adjusted, and happy children. Both successful and unsuccessful cases involving both approaches have been extensively documented. Case studies show that sequential bilingualism is one of the most common types among mobile families. The family moves to a new country, usually for work-related reasons, and the children find themselves in the position of having to learn a new language. Another reason for sequential bilingualism is that children whose parents both speak a language which is different from that spoken by the community at large will learn their parents' language first and start to learn the community language only after their social contacts widen, particularly when they begin going to school. Simultaneous bilingualism, on the other hand, is more often than not 'planned' bilingualism where parents make a conscious effort to raise their child to become bilingual. The degree of success can be pinned to such factors as whether the parents are consistent in their language use, whether the child receives enough exposure to the non-dominant language, whether he or she perceives the need to use both languages, and whether he or she has the right kind and amount of social support.

I would argue that parents who have different native languages, one of which is the community language, may achieve more successful results by choosing simultaneous bilingualism for their child. It is true that some children may no longer feel the need to use both their languages in everyday life once they become aware that the parent who speaks the non-dominant language can also speak the dominant language and as their social contacts broaden. In the case of simultaneous bilingualism this becomes a matter of maintenance, while in the case of early sequential bilingualism the second language has to be learned from scratch. The latter would seem to be by far the more daunting of the two tasks.

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