

The Effect of Bilingual Environments on Education and Learning

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Abstract:

It can be noticed that this world is vast and diverse when it comes to the matter of language. Also, one can notice that, in many countries around the world, various people with different cultures can appear. All of those people speak different languages. Also, those people will certainly speak with various accents. Such diversity can make multilingual environments. Such environments can be found in many schools in many countries. As a result, this research tries to focus on the topic of bilingual environment and its effect on education and learning. In addition, this research tries to explore the meaning of bilingualism. Moreover, this research will try to focus a little bit on the meaning of the bilingual family and its role in providing the best conditions to achieve a bilingual environment for their children. In addition, this research will show the different kinds of bilingual programs that can be presented to the students in the schools and the effect of bilingual environments in the classroom. Since this topic is really important, more research is required about it. As a consequence, it is important to make the Iraqi EFL college instructors know more about this topic. Therefore, it will be very helpful to hold a lot of educational workshops that cover this subject in order to increase their background understanding of it.

Introduction

Before beginning with this research, it will be beneficial to start with some definitions. Swann et al. (2004, p.214-215) state that the term multilingualism can be seen as a synonym word for bilingualism. This thing can be noticed in much of linguistic writing. However, in recent times, sociolinguists, believe that it is crucial to make these two terms distinguished from each other. This is important so that bilingualism can be seen as the usage of double languages, and multilingualism can be seen as the usage of triple or more than two languages.

In addition, Bucholtz and Zimman (2019, p.262) say that, when it comes to the matter of language, it can be noticed that one of the main ways that individual people differ from each other is in their linguistic repertoires. They also say that, while in some communities most people have the capability to use only one language, most people around the world have the capability to

use more than one language. The first kind of people -who use one language only, are considered monolingual people, and the second kind of people -who use two languages or more than two- are considered multilingual people. They also say that it may seem that wider repertoires are possessed by those who know multiple languages, than those who only know one language.

Since the topic of the bilingual environment and its effect on learning and education is an important one, this research aims at exploring the difference among the various terms of monolingualism, bilingualism, and multilingualism. Also, this research shows the privileges that multilingual people can benefit from their linguistic abilities. Furthermore, this research aims at introducing a brief discussion about the role that bilingual family can play in creating a bilingual environment for their children, and the effect of the bilingual programs and environments in the school in the learning and education of the students inside the classroom.

By discussing the topic of the effect of bilingual environment on learning and education, it is hoped that this research can make Iraqi EFL college instructors increase their background knowledge about this essential matter that can help them in their work. It is also hoped that this research can be of great help to the Iraqi EFL college students who want to start from a point regarding this topic and for those who wish to gain more introductory knowledge that can help them in their further researches

1.1 Terminology Differences

Concerning the matter of terminology, it can be noticed that there are three terms that are used. Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2011, p.460) say that the term bilingualism can be used to point to the capability of the individual speaker who can speak two languages or even much more than two languages. This thing is known as individual bilingualism. In addition, the term bilingualism can be used to point to the capability to speak two languages or even much more than two languages within a society. This thing is known as societal bilingualism.

Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2011, p.461) also state that bilingualism or multilingualism can be used to point to nations that have a certain type of situation. In this situation, two or more than two languages are spoken in these nations. These languages can also be recognized as the official languages or the national languages.

Furthermore, Richards and Schmidt (2010, p.374) say that the term monolingual can be given the definition of an individual who knows a single language and uses only this single language. They also say that the term

monolingual refer to the individual who possesses an active knowledge of only a single language. Furthermore, this individual possesses, perhaps a passive knowledge of other different languages. In addition, the term bilingual is defined by Richards and Schmidt (2010, p.54) as the individual who has the capability of using at least two languages with some amount of expertise. Usually, the term bilingualism can be used in everyday to point to the individual who can understand, speak or read double languages in an equal way. This thing is also called 'a balanced bilingual'. However, the individual is considered as a bilingual one, usually, has an improved knowledge of one language more than the other language. For example, this person, who is considered as a bilingual one, may have the capability of using only one language to write and read. This bilingual individual may also use one of the languages in different kinds of domains. That is, one language can be used to communicate while he is at home and the other while he is at work. Moreover, this bilingual individual may also use one of the languages that he possesses to talk about school life, and the other language to express his personal feelings.

Additionally, Trask (1999, p.20) says that over seventy percent of the population of Earth is assumed to be bilingual or multilingual, and the term multilingual is connected to the individual who has the ability to speak three languages or more than that. He also says that it is believed that the norm for most people for the last few millennia, has been multilingualism.

1.2 Privileges of Bilingualism

It may be noticed that multilingual people enjoy different and various privileges. Baker and Jones (1998, p.6) say that many advantages, of becoming bilingual, are suggested by current research and writing. The first type of advantage of becoming a bilingual individual is the communication advantage. The children who become bilinguals will have the advantage to be capable of communicating with their fathers in the preferred first languages of their parents and with their mothers in the preferred first languages of their mothers. Such a thing may provide a type of a relationship that has a finer and subtler texture with the parent. In addition, bilingual children will use different languages to communicate in different situations. One language is used to be capable of communicating with the parents, and another language is used to be able to communicate with friends and within the wider community. It is clear that, for many parents, being capable of communicating in their first language with the child is an important thing. Communication, for many parents, can only be expressive, natural and full of

intimacy when they used their first language. Optimal close relationships may be enabled with parents. Also, a piece of the past and a part of the heritage can be passed from the parents to their children.

Moreover, Baker and Jones (1998, p.6) also say that having the ability to speak more than one language will make the individual act as a bridge that connects the generations. When aunts, uncles, grandparents and other relatives speak a different language and live in another region try to communicate with a monolingual individual, the monolingual individual may be incapable of communicating with the relatives. The person who is bilingual, however, may be able to serve as a link between the generations. Such a thing enables the development of a closer bond with the relatives. In addition, rootedness and a sense of belonging will also be established in the extended family. Similarly, the minority heritage language of the family can be carried forward by the multilingual children. On the other hand, a sense of alienation may be felt by the monolingual child from the family and the past without the heritage language of the family. Also, there will be an advantage to the bilinguals who travel inside their country, travel to other neighboring, or international countries, this is because bridges to new relationships may be provided by the languages that the bilinguals speak. The monolinguals will have more limited opportunities to establish relationships with people who come from different ethnic groups and people who have different nationalities.

Baker and Jones (1998, p.7) also continue by saying that bilinguals may have more sensitivity when they communicate. In other words, having the privilege of capability of changing between languages may make the bilingual individual more sensitive when he communicates. It can be noticed that research suggests that there may be more empathy that is given by bilinguals to satisfy the needs of the listeners in communication. Bilingual people may act as more patient listeners than monolingual people when they speak with people who do not speak the first language of the bilingual people.

In addition, Baker and Jones (1998, p.7) say that there are some cultural advantages that multilingual people can benefit from. Two or more than worlds of experience will be available to bilingual people. In other words, two or more cultures can be experienced with bilingualism. It can be noticed that various cultures may be experienced by the monolingual speaker from different communities and from the different neighbors who only use the language that the monolingual speaker knows. The monolingual people can

have the opportunity to travel to different neighboring countries, the cultures of these neighboring countries can be experienced by the monolingual people and they will be passive onlookers. However, languages of different cultures are required to be capable of penetrating different cultures. The knowledge of one language of a specific culture will be required in order to participate most of people and be involved in the core of that culture. One can notice that folk sayings, traditions, ways of joking and mourning, histories, stories, ways of understanding and interpreting the world, different kinds of literatures, ways of meeting and greeting, forms of entertainment, ideas and beliefs, music, ways of thinking, religious traditions, ways of conversing, the different systems of behavior and many other things can be found in each language. A wider cultural experience can be found with two languages. The cultures of different languages can actively be penetrated by bilingual people. Also, potential economic privileges will be available to the bilinguals. A bilingual person may benefit from his language in being able to have various selections of jobs available for him.

Furthermore, Baker and Jones (1998, p.8) say that cognitive advantages can also be found. That is, research shows that bilingual people may have some privileges in thinking. Greater sensitivity in communication, creative thinking, and quicker advancement in early cognitive development are some examples of these cognitive advantages that bilingual people can benefit from.

Also, Sears (1998, p.44-45) says that one of the benefits of bilingualism is that it may lead or make the bilingual individual into being a more creative thinker. In other words, it may make the bilingual individual as someone who is better able to think in a divergent way. A greater selection of strategies of learning may also be utilized by bilingual people. This happens since the own usage of the two languages constantly needs to be internally monitored by bilingual people. In addition, bilingual people may be more skilled at adapting to diverse situations of the language. Besides, bilingual people may have a better capability -than the monolingual people- in interpreting non-verbal cues. The teachers who work in international schools may notice the differences in practice. That is to say, those teachers may notice how a greater awareness can be shown bilingual people of the way the languages work. Also, an increased ability is demonstrated by bilingual people of learning more languages in a successful way.

1.3 Bilingual Environment and Families

As for the matter of the bilingual family, Barron-Hauwaert (2011, p.4) states that a bilingual or multilingual family is a type of family in which there is regular usage of two or more languages. It is clear that there are numerous variations within the bilingual family that can be observed. For instance, the mother and father may speak different languages, the family lives in a country which is better described as a second-language country, a parent communicates with their children by the usage of a second language, or a situation in which the family is living in a country, or a community in which there is a use of two languages.

The effective environment of the bilingual family is also shown. Barron-Hauwaert (2011, p.4) says that when the bilingual family has a second child, the family will be delighted to see that the first child, that is, the fluent child of the two languages, starts teaching songs and words to the second new child. In many families, the conversations that are considered chat-friendly and the role modeling that the big sibling gives can be beneficial to the subsequent children in the family. In other words, the subsequent children can be transformed into linguistically competent speakers with the aid of the big brother.

Furthermore, Baker (2007, p.5-6) states that bilingualism is chosen by some parents for their children. He also says that the matter of bilingualism, for many other parents, is seen as something automatic. What's more, in many parts, where the matter of bilingualism is seen as the normal thing, families have better chances to raise bilingual children. He also says that plenty of stimulating language experience needs to be found in order to the child to be transformed into a fully bilingual child. The experience includes reading, writing, speaking and listening in both languages. Some families provide this stimulating language experience better than other families. A natural and straightforward pattern of the two languages can be given by some of the families. For example, one of the parents can provide one language and the other parent provides another different language. There is a communicative interaction that happens between the parents and the child for a considerable amount of time. In addition, the child may be in a situation in which one of the languages is learned by him at home and the other language is learned in a school or a community. Additionally, bilingualism can be less likely to be promoted in other situations. For example, the child may have uneven growth of the language if the father was the source that gives the minority language experience to his child and this father leaves the home for long periods of

time. In other situations, bilingualism will be seen as a challenging matter that requires effort and enterprise if parents put their child in a nursery school all day. In such situation, bilingualism will be difficult because the home language will be heard by the child for only a short time in the evening or at weekends.

Baker (2007, p.6) continues by saying that language planning is an important thing and it is required to be found in families that find that bilingualism is more difficult to achieve. It must be noticed that a perfect balance in exposure to the two languages is something impossible to achieve. However, the language that is seen as the minority or the weaker language may need to be stimulated more inside the home in order to encounter the dominance of the language that is seen as the stronger language or the majority language outside the home. Correspondingly, in a particular family situation where bilingualism is seen as something more difficult to be achieved inside this family, there is a requirement for a plan of action that is well thought out. Continuous monitoring and discussion between the parents need to have occurred. Even in difficult circumstances, bilingualism will be flourished if there is a plan that is directed towards the child that shows when he will be exposed to the two languages, and how and when this exposure to the two languages will happen so as to make sure that these languages are developed well.

In addition, the effect of the bilingual environment inside the home is also shown as Baker (2007, p.6-7) says that there is a requirement for a strategy if the child has not got enough experience in listening to a language and speaking it. Moreover, the quantity and the quality of exposure to the two languages need to be considered. Competence in one language will unlikely to be developed in a situation in which the child hears that language for thirty minutes a day. Furthermore, there will be a realistic existence chance of bilingualism if the child was purposely exposed to an ever increasing variety of language. This exposure to the language needs to be found in different contexts such as visits to the zoo, books, and listening to cassette tapes. Also, the interactive quality of the language is something crucial. In some families, there is a rareness in communicative interaction between the parents and the children. Some parents may show the other extreme. In such situation, the children can be bombarded by a never- ending stream of languages by their parents. In other words, the child takes the language but there is no encouragement given to him to give back the language. Language games are

given to the child, role play, songs said together, are examples that guarantee that there is active, alive and valued language development by the child. Furthermore, Baker (2007, p.7) says that, in many different situations, bilingualism can be possible. This can happen if purpose, care, thought and pleasure are found. Positive attitudes, motivation and often considerable perseverance are required from the parents to achieve the goal. The bilingual skills of the children change in a constant way. A school or friends change, the relationship inside the families, the geographical movements of the families and socioeconomic ones help in making the child stronger in one of the languages. Furthermore, the influence that comes from the brothers, the sisters, or the friends in the community, the influence that comes from the school, the employment conditions of the parents, the geographical stability and mobility, the different relationships that change inside the nuclear or the extended family, and the child's attitudes and motivations are examples of some of the factors that are likely to have an effect on the capability of the family to make bilingual children.

1.4 Bilingual Environments and Education

Concerning the topic of bilingual environment and education, Richards and Schmidt (2010, p.54-55) say that bilingual education is a situation in which the content of the subjects in school is taught by the usage of a second or a foreign language. Different kinds of bilingual education programs can be seen. For example, there is a type of a program which is sometimes termed an "immersion program". In this program, the teaching is done by the usage of only one language. The language that is used to teach the children is different from their home language. Similarly, the second program is termed as the "maintenance educational program". In this type of program, the child's home language is used to provide the teaching when the child starts the school. However, a gradual change happens later. In other words, some of the subjects are taught by the usage of the language of the school, while other school subjects are taught by the usage of the home language. Furthermore, another type is called "transitional bilingual education". Another name for this program is the "early exit bilingual education". In this program, the child's home language is partially or totally used when the child starts school. Changes happen at a later stage. In other words, there is a usage of the school language only. Another type is termed as "bidialectal" or the "bilingual education". In this program, the language of the school is the standard dialect and the home language of the child is another dialect.

Also, Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2011, p.467) say that teachers, researchers, parents, and the general public have been debating very much over what are the best methods that could be used so that the school-age children may be taught the English language, as well as over the value of promoting and maintaining the abilities of their native language. What is more numerous studies have showed the support that immigrant children have when their native languages are used for instruction. Children are allowed by bilingual classes to obtain speech styles, school-related vocabulary and different kinds of aspects which are specific or connected to a school environment. This thing happens when the instruction is in the native languages of the children and similarly, while those children learn the English language. Content materials can be learned with the children by the help of the bilingual classes. Children do not speak English- are allowed by bilingual classes to keep up with the other children –who speak English - during the time that takes the children -who do not speak English- to master the English language. Recent studies that made comparisons between the different programs to display the effectiveness of the different kinds of programs have found that children who participated in programs that are bilingual outperformed the children who participated in English-only programs.

1.5 Conclusions

All in all, this research showed that there are various and different levels or steps in languages. The first level is called the level of monolingualism, refers to the situation in which the individual speaks one language only. The second level is bilingualism, which refers to the situation in which the individual speaks two languages only. Multilingualism is an upgrade level, which refers to a situation in which the individual speaks three or more than three languages. It must be noticed that, even with bilingualism, the individual can present different degrees of control. In other words, a bilingual may have a balanced proficiency in each of the two languages. In this situation, the individual is called a balanced bilingual. However, the common matter for bilingual people is that they have more proficiency in one language than the other. They may also use each one of their languages in various domains of life.

One can assert that the majority of people in the world are considered as bilingual people. Furthermore, immersing the individual in a bilingual environment can bring various benefits. People who are bilingual may have greater opportunities than monolinguals in various facets of life.. The

bilingual people can have social, cognitive, and financial benefits that can give them a boost in life and make them able to achieve their goals easily. All of this shows the importance of being an individual who speaks more than one language. This also shows the importance of creating a bilingual environment that support the children and make them able to learn multiple languages. Various methods can be followed. To make this environment a real thing a stimulating language experience must be provided to the child. In other words, there must be a balanced and consistent exposure to the languages so that bilingualism can be promoted. It is noticed that some families will be more successful in providing an effective bilingual environment, while other families will find some difficulties. The families that find a difficulty in creating a bilingual environment for their children need to have language planning. A continuous monitoring and discussions are required from the parents about the difficulties and the best solutions for these difficulties will make bilingualism flourish in their children. The communicative interaction between the parents and their children is an important way that must occur in different contexts. Also, the parents must give some of their time, have patience, and enjoy the process of creating this bilingual environment for their children so that their children can become bilingual speakers.

Likewise, the process of creating a bilingual environment inside the classroom can have fruitful benefits for the students. Students need to be immersed in bilingual environments by making them enroll in different programs that are focused on promoting the different languages of the different students in the classroom. The intellectual and social capabilities of the students will be enhanced by these programs. Moreover, alternating between the languages of the instruction inside the classroom can make the students have a sense of belonging and feel that their languages and cultures are appreciated. Such an action can help in promoting bilingualism inside the classroom and in the students.

To sum up, the topic of the effect that bilingual environments can bring on language and education is a crucial one. There is a necessity for workshops to be made so that Iraqi EFL college instructors can enhance their background knowledge about the topic and understand the importance of such a topic.

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تأثير البيئات ثنائية اللغة على التعليم والتعلم

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مستخلص البحث:

يمكن ملاحظة ان هذا العالم شاسع ومتنوع عندما يتعلق الامر بمسألة اللغة. أيضاً، يمكن للمرء ان يلاحظ انه في العديد من البلدان حول العالم، يمكن ان يظهر اشخاص مختلفون من ثقافات مختلفة. كل هؤلاء الناس يتحدثون لغات مختلفة. أيضاً، سيتحدث هؤلاء الأشخاص بلهجات مختلفة بالتأكيد. مثل هذا التنوع يمكن ان يصنع بيئات متعددة اللغات. يمكن العثور على مثل هذه البيئات في العديد من المدارس في العديد من البلدان. نتيجة لذلك، يحاول هذا البحث التركيز على موضوع البيئة ثنائية اللغة وتأثيرها على التعليم والتعلم. أيضاً، يحاول هذا البحث استكشاف معنى ثنائية اللغة. علاوة على ذلك، سيحاول هذا البحث التركيز قليلاً على معنى العائلة ثنائية اللغة ودورها في توفير أفضل الظروف لتحقيق بيئة ثنائية اللغة لأطفالهم. بالإضافة الى ذلك، سيعرض هذا البحث الأنواع المختلفة للبرامج ثنائية اللغة التي يمكن تقديمها للطلاب في المدارس وتأثير البيئات ثنائية اللغة في الفصل الدراسي. نظراً لأن هذا الموضوع جداً مهم، يلزم اجراء المزيد من الأبحاث حوله. نتيجة لذلك، من المهم جعل أساتذة الجامعة العراقيين – الذين يُدرسون اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة اجنبية- يعرفون المزيد عن هذا الموضوع. لذلك، سيكون من المفيد حقاً اجراء العديد من ورش العمل التعليمية التي تشرح هذا الأمر لزيادة خلفيتهم المعرفية حول هذا الموضوع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ثنائي اللغة، البيئة، التعليم، التعلم.