〔Note〕

Perspectives of Bilingualism and Language Development

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There are several ways to become bilingual. Some people are born in a bilingual environment and grow up as bilingual whereas some learn a second language (L2) after they have grown up monolingually. Those who acquired an L2 in adulthood rarely reach native speaker competence, whereas early bilinguals have a much higher chance. Because of this, some think it is easy to reach balanced bilingual competence if one is in a bilingual environment in childhood. However, as Okazaki-Luff (2008) points out, bringing up a bilingual child requires effort, determination, and financial resources. It also can be a great psychological burden for both the parent and child to meet their psychological needs. In this paper, I look into these aspects of bringing up a bilingual child. The term bilingual will be used to refer to users of two languages regardless of their fluency.

Factors contributing to bilingualism

Some families speak two languages because the parents are native speakers of two different languages. These parents usually wish their children to acquire both of their languages. However, a number of mix race celebrities (hafu tarento) on TV, who are from bilingual families, show that many of them are not fluent in the minority language, despite them all being fluent speakers of Japanese, the societal language. In cases of bilingual families with native speakers of two different languages, the children generally seem to acquire high competence in the societal language because they grow up in an environment where they receive abundant input in the societal language. On the contrary, providing enough input in the minority language so that the children acquire it seems to be much more challenging. The rule of thumb for children to become productively bilingual is that the children need to be exposed to the minority language at least 20% of their waking hours (Pearson, 2008). Though this does not appear to be a large amount of time, it is not as easy as it seems. In order to secure this amount of minority language input, it is crucial for the bilingual families to have a clear strategy.

There are various strategies the families can choose from, however, among them One Parent-One Language (OPOL) and Minority Language at Home (mL@H) are the two most typically employed strategies. For OPOL, each adult should use exclusively his or her mother tongue (Grammont, 1902 as cited in Hamers & Blanc, 2000). For families with parents that are native speakers of two languages, this is a simple and straightforward method. Therefore this is often employed among such couples, and possibly the most commonly practiced strategy in Japan. On the other hand, mL@H is

more often used by immigrant families. The children are exposed to the societal language outside home, such as at school or at local activities, while they use the minority language at home mostly with their parents or relatives.

There are many research studies that have looked into how successful these strategies are. De Hower (2007) conducted a large-scale survey of bilingual families in Dutch-speaking Belgium. The participant families spoke various minority languages and employed various strategies. On the whole, the rate that at least one child in the family also spoke their family minority language was over three-quarters. The families that used OPOL had the lower success rate of 74% compared to that of mL@H with 79%.

This high success rate does not seem to be only a European phenomenon. Pearson (2010) reported that Yamamoto's (2002) survey in Japan yielded even higher success rate of 83% with OPOL and 93% with mL@h. While the success rate of mL@H does not appear to be counterintuitive, the success rate with OPOL of 83% in Japan comes across as surprisingly high. A quick scan of my environment indicates only three out of 12 children of families using OPOL functionally speak the minority language and these three have all received schooling in the minority language. This means that none of the children experiencing only OPOL became functionally bilingual.

One point that should be kept in mind is that these surveys were not created to measure the children's fluency in the minority language, but to find out whether they use it. That is, the phrase 'productively bilingual' in these studies are not to be equated with 'native speaker competence' or even 'high competence' in the minority language.

The original questionnaire of Yamamoto's survey (2002) is presented in another paper (Yamamoto, 2001). The questionnaire had a section that asks the parents of the children to write what languages the children speak natively. The responses to this section show out of the 209 children who took part in the survey, two-thirds (126) were judged as native speakers by their parents. Though the success rate here is more modest than the rate of 'productively bilingual', still it seems to be much higher than what appears to the casual observer in everyday life. It is impossible to deny the chance that the demographic around me happened to be abnormally skewed, however these children are in socioeconomically middle-class backgrounds. There may be a gap between the level of competence a layperson expects of functional bilingualism and the level of bilingual competence in academic literature. If there is such a gap, it is deserving of research. Otherwise, this gap may lead to parental dissatisfaction caused by their expectation of success raised by these studies.

As for the most efficient strategy, researchers unanimously recommend Yamamoto's (2001) "principle of maximal engagement with the minority language". This is, as the name suggests, the child should have maximum possible input in the minority language.

In addition to these stategies, the gender of the minority-language-speaking parent appears to affect the success rate. However, de Hower's survey (2008) debunked this view. Still, in Japan men are expected to spend longer hours at work than women and have shorter contact time with their children, gender may still play a role here in a indirect manner. Jackson (2006) suggests that minority language speaking fathers (in his case English speakers) in Japan play a secondary role

in child rearing. This also may contribute to a different outcome due to the gender of the minority language speaker.

Hanai's (2016) study shed light on other factors that also play a role. She studied mixed language, Japanese and Korean speaking couples in both countries. She found out that perceived prestige of Japanese and government support in Korea raised the heritage language status of Japanese in the family. On the other hand, the Korean language in Japan doesn't enjoy the same prestige and support, therefore the parents in Japan did not as actively promote learning Korean as their counterparts did with Japanese in Korea. Her study also showed the parents' competence in the minority language was also a factor influencing what strategy they could choose. For example, it takes both parents to be able to speak the minority language if they want to implement mL@H, which allows more exposure to the minority language for their children. If the minority language speaker is not competent in the societal language, the children will have to use the minority language to communicate with the parent exclusively. This way such children have a higher chance of becoming fluent in the minority language. Hanai's study illustrated this point: the Japanese mothers in Korea were less fluent in Korean and subsequently their children had higher chance of reaching high competence in Japanese.

Semilingualism

Even after their children have shown some competence in the minority language, some parents still have a concern. They fear that their child may become "semilingual" or "double-limited". Hamers and Blanc (2002) define semilingualism as "a term used to denote a state in the language development of a bilingual who has reached native-speaker competence in none of his languages." By definition, this is a phenomenon unique only to early bilinguals and is not applicable to monolinguals and late bilinguals who already are native speakers of their L1. The concept of semilingualism can be used against early bilinguals due to their definitions.

Do bilinguals have inferior competence in both languages in comparison to monolinguals? Many researchers acknowledge that there is a difference between a bilingual and a monolingual, such as vocabulary size. Grosjean (2008) compares the difference between monolinguals and bilinguals by comparing a monolingual to a 100m runner and a high jumper, and a bilingual to a hurdler. That is, a hurdler doesn't run as fast as a 100m runner or jump as high as a high jumper, but a hurdler can do something neither of the 100m runner nor the high jumper can do. Bilinguals' language skills cannot be directly compared to that of monolinguals'.

The concept of semilingualism originally emerged in the 60s in studies of immigrants in Scandinavia and since then it has been debated by bilingualism researchers. There are a number of different views. I break them down here into two major types: one view considers semilingualism a transitional state of a subgroup of bilinguals, and the other views it as a fixed and typical characteristic among bilinguals.

The first group focuses on immigrants' children and view 'semilingualism' as a transitional state which some immigrant children fall into and emphasize the importance of L1. Their discussions tend to focus on academic disadvantages caused by semilingualism on bilingual children in unprivileged socioeconomic environments. The most notable researcher in this group, Cummins (1976) warned many bilingual children in the transitional state of losing their L1 and acquiring L2 competence (subtractive bilingualism) may become semilingual. He proposed (Cummins, 1980) the distinction between 'basic interpersonal communicative skills' (BICS) and 'cognitive/academic language proficiency' (CALP). He states (Cummins, 1980) that it takes only a couple of years to reach the age appropriate level of BICS in L2 and they come across as having become fluent in their L2. However it takes about seven years to reach a high level of the CALP. During this transitional period, it is essential to maintain their L1 and assist their learning in their L1.

Takahashi's fieldwork (2007) was carried out using the BICS/CALP framework. She studied the third or fourth generation children of 'war-displaced Japanese' who were repatriated. The participants consisted of seven of these children between seven and ten years old whose parents were culturally Chinese and spoke Chinese as their L1 with very limited or no Japanese. They had been in the Japanese school system since daycare age and none of them had any schooling in China. They spoke Chinese at home with parents, but Japanese with their siblings. However, their Japanese competence was low and they received extra classes both in Japanese as Second Language (JSL) and Chinese at their elementary school. The test results on their Japanese indicated most of them had limited BICS and CALP. She emphasized the importance of Chinese as their heritage language but suggested that the school should switch their perspective to see Japanese as their L1 and concentrate on improving their competence.

Other longitudinal fieldwork (Kanno, 2004) in Japan studied a similar group of children, immigrants from Asian countries, but used a very different framework. The immigrant children at an elementary school were going through L1 attrition before they have achieved full competence in L2 Japanese, and subsequently their school achievement suffered. This phenomenon qualifies as a case of 'semilingualism'. (It should be noted that Kanno does not use term 'semilingualism' in the study herself.) She also did not use BICS and CALP framework in this study. Instead, she adopted Cummins's theory of identity negotiation (2000) as the framework and did analysis in terms of power relationships. The children received JSL classes but not classes in their L1 (their heritage languages) at school since the school lacked resource and also considered L1 maintenance to be the responsibility of the families. Some of the children, according to the principal, after they had reached high Japanese competence, became leading figures in class. The school and teachers were supportive of maintenance of the students' cultural identity were putting effort into it. However, the school as a system functioned as an assimilation process for the children, resulting in linguistic homogeneity, namely Japanese monolingualism.

The children in both studies are from low socioeconomic backgrounds and the parents were reported as being not able to assist their children much academically due to shortages of money, time, or societal language skills. Some are from a cultures that parents do not become involved much with the children's learning. For these reasons, the low academic achievement observed in both cases should not be simply reduced down to a simple lack of language competence in the children.

There are word-of-mouth stories on semilingualism in some Japanese books aimed at the public (Ono 1994, Nakajima 2016). This seems to reflect and promote Japanese parents' underlying fear of semilingualism. Some of these stories explicitly refer to Cummins, but even ones which do not refer to him, still seem to be strongly influenced by Cummins' BICS/CALP framework because they emphasizes the danger of subtractive bilingualism and the importance on L1 maintenance. One author focuses so much on L1 maintenance that the author advises parents who are about to move overseas with their children for a short period (under one year), not to try to have their children to learn the local language. However, these anecdotes tend to be short on description and remain hard to identify whether they truly qualify as cases of semilingualism.

The second group of researchers view semilingualism not as a transitional state which some bilinguals experience, but a typical linguistic characteristic among bilingual/multilingual speakers, including adults. Academic underachievement is seen as a phenomenon that often accompanies semilingualism in their arguments too, but does not become the main focus of their arguments. They seem to agree that semilinguals speak differently from the standard version of the language, which is the monolingual norm.

Hinnenkamp (2005) and Lucchini (2009) analyzed conversations among immigrants, bilinguals of Turkish and German, and those of Italian and French, respectively. They both report that the participants' language was different from the norm but they came to different conclusions. Lucchini focused on deviant forms used by bilinguals and emphasizes the importance of respecting the semilingual children's mother tongue (in this case they are speakers of hybridized French which is probably stigmatized). She also strongly insists they should have a chance to learn to read and write in standard language so that they can internalize the correct forms early on. Hinnenkamp, on the other hand, focused on code-switching and concluded that the Turkish youths' code-switching is a functional language of its own right. He frames this semilingualism issue in a power relationship and views expecting them to learn to speak two standard languages (a.k.a. balanced bilingualism) as 'double monolingualism'. He concludes his argument as follows:

> If school and the majority discourse took heed this insight into language as an open, imperfect polysystem, then certainly migrants' languages as well as their polylectal varieties, their mixtures and creations with and in between languages would not anymore be ignored or denunciated as semilingualism.

There are some researchers who advocate the power relationship view of bilingualism/semilingualism and developed the argument further. As an extension of the concept 'languaging' (Becker, 1988), Garcia and Wei (2014) proposed 'translanguaging'. They do not consider bilingualism as two separate linguistic systems but one linguistic system which consists of two integrated languages. In order to communicate with a monolingual person, a bilingual may use only the part that is understood by the monolingual interlocutor and can act monolingually. This, however, does not mean a bilingual has two separate linguistic systems. They even decline the concept of languages, such as English or Japanese. The reason is, according to them, these languages exist in comparison with the existence of others, and not on their own. This comes across as extreme even

though I believe their argument makes the poignant point that bilingualism has been discussed in monolingually biased perspectives and may have neglected to reflect how bilinguals themselves perceive it. Diminishing the concept of languages may be good food for thought, yet in practice, it may do more disservice than provide advantage. For monolingual people, language differences actually exist and function as communication barriers and this concept remains a useful tool. Nonetheless practical applications of translanguaging appear to be fruitful under many circumstances. In multilingual classrooms, the concept of translanguaging has already been introduced as a didactic method and it deserves further study.

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(2018 年 11 月 23 日掲載決定)