The State of Bilingualism among Secondary School in Erbil City

Asst. Lect. Eiram Amjed Khudhr

Department of General Education, College of Education and Languages, Lebanese French University, Erbil, Kurdistan

eiram.amjed@lfu.edu.krd

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ABSTRACT

The factors that induce one to utilize an exact language at a fixed timeframe can be examined. Why do people prefer to use one language rather than another, what causes their languages to shift from one to the other, and why do they occasionally prefer to use a language consisting of two different languages by shifting back and forth or even merging them? Such problems are examined in the study by elaborating and addressing the status of bilingualism in a private secondary school of "Classical School of the Medes" precisely in Erbil city, the effects, benefits, and drawbacks. The methodology of this study is qualitative. Data was collected utilizing an interview instrument on the problem inquiry from a sociolinguistic framework. The findings of this study demonstrate that bilingualism has greater benefits and few or no drawbacks for students in private schools, and that English language study in private schools reduces the usage of Kurdish language among society.

1 Introduction

This study is about the status of bilingualism in private schools, focusing on the effects of bilingualism and the factors that help students to become bilinguals from a sociolinguistic perspective. Bilingualism has affected the minor languages negatively, and has disadvantages along with the advantages. This study discusses issues like: What are the advantages and disadvantages of bilingualism on children? Does it have more positive effects or negative? Can the status of bilingualism in private schools be

a threat for Kurdish language use for younger generation? The objectives of this study are to find out the effects of bilingualism on students from different backgrounds and nations from a sociolinguistic perspective. Further, to find out whether bilingualism affect or decrease the use of Kurdish language in the society. It is hypothesized that bilingualism has disadvantages as much as advantages, and that the use of English language and studying in English in private schools is a source of danger for the use of Kurdish language. The methodology of this paper is aimed at designing qualitative research through interviewing students in a private school, and collecting data through semi-structured questions to gain more information about the title. The scope of this study is investigating the status of bilingualism in CSM (Classical School of the Medes) private school, and collecting data from a group of grade eight students from different origins, as Kurds, Arabs, and Assyrians.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Bilingualism

The word bilingualism has been defined differently from different scholars' perspective, as Lakhe and Mohanty claims (1994) that bilingualism is 'one's ability to meet communicative demands in society and interact with other speakers in two or more languages', as a sociocultural perspective (Ng, 2015).

MacNamara's (1967) believes that whoever can express, transcribe, recite or comprehend a second language besides their mother tongue at least to a little proportion might be classified as a bilingual person. Thus, according to these definitions only those who can speak two languages impeccably are bilinguals (Takala, 2016).

However, still there are definitions for bilingualism that are more distinctive like Titone's (1972) definition as he states that a person's ability to articulate a second language and applying the rules and constructions of that code without translating their mother tongue (Takala, 2016). Either each, it is not easy to define bilingualism. The emphasis will be on the native and foreign students who can speak and write two different languages and use them flexibly in different situations.

2.2 Types of Bilingualism

There are many different types of bilingual speakers that differ according to the society and the environment they come from, but for this paper only two types will be discussed as to clarify the types of early bilingual participants of this work: simultaneous and successive bilinguals.

2.2.1 Simultaneous Bilingual

"Simultaneous early bilingualism occurs in situations when a child acquires two languages at the same time, from birth. This often produces a strong bilingualism." (Moradi, 2014)

2.2.2 Successive Bilingual

"Successive early bilingualism occurs in situations when a child who has already partially acquired a L1 (first language) and then acquires a L2 (second language) early in childhood; an example can be when a child moves to another place where the dominant language is not his native language. This usually results in the production of a strong bilingualism, but the child needs time to learn the L2." (Moradi, 2014)

2.3 The Effects of Bilingualism on Children

Friesen, Latman, Calvo, and Bialystok mentions in 2015 that bilingualism has many positive effects on children, such as increased attention, increased intercultural competence, and increased cognition compared to monolingual individuals.

Additionally, individuals who are bilingual experience increased intercultural competence than those that are not bilingual. When children learn a second language, they often learn about the culture associated with the native individuals that speak that language (Ng, 2015).

Children as learners in private schools may become bilingual and bicultural. These schools aim to enrich students' home languages alongside their development in English, which is the school language, in which some or all school subjects are taught not in the students' mother tongue, but a standard language that the local community signify (Ng, 2015).

Peal and Lambert stated: "Intellectually [the bilingual child's] experience with two

language systems seems to have left him with a mental flexibility, a superiority in concept formation, a more diversified set of mental abilities" (Bialystok et al., 2012).

A study conducted by Paap, Johnson, and Sawi (2015) approved the dissimilarities in cognitive status of monolingual and bilingual spokespersons to be owing to immigration status, educational level, and socioeconomic status. Theories on bilingualism settle the general principle that it becomes easier to learn additional languages after becoming proficient in multiple.

Additionally, bilingualism has advantages like developing students' academic intelligence. Previous studies shows that mastering two languages aids students' brain to do multi-tasks, retain and comprehend new knowledge effortlessly (Takala, 2016).

Likewise, bilingualism has disadvantages on students. According to Fernald (2006) as he compared monolingual children to bilingual ones in his experiment. His findings show that monolingual participants differentiate the features of mother tongue easier than the bilingual participants. Since the bilingual speakers are less exposed to any of the two languages they speak as compared to monolingual ones (Fernald 2006). Yet, this linguistic postponement does not continue for a long time, due to bilingual speakers' immense ability to learn new knowledge easier (Takala, 2016).

3 Methodology

3.1 The Study's Objectives and Queries

The objectives of this study are to showcase both advantages and disadvantages of bilingualism for students in private schools in Erbil city. Three case studies of bilingual students have been presented as the practical part of this study. Moreover, this work tries to investigate the possibility that a second language can be decrease the use of mother tongue among its speakers or not. This study focuses on the following questions:

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of bilingualism on children?
2. Does bilingualism has more advantages than disadvantages?

3. Can the status of bilingualism in private schools be a threat for the mother tongue use by younger generation?

3.2 Data Collection

This study showcases three case studies, and the data is collected in the form of semi-structured interview. The participants were students from a private school in Erbil city called: "Classical School of the Medes", and abbreviated as CSM. The students have acquired bilingualism due to the society they interact with and the school they studied in since their childhood. The participants were from three different origins, as Kurds, Assyrians, and Arabs, aged 13-14 years old. They were 7th grade students of secondary level. The Kurds and the Arab students were successive bilinguals, they had learnt the second language as they started their study in an English private school. Gradually the Kurd participants become Kurdish-English bilinguals and the Arab participants having the ability to speak Arabic and English languages. As for the Assyrian participants, they were simultaneous bilinguals, they had acquired Assyrian language at home, learnt using the second language (Arabic) at the same time as they learnt the first language at a very young age, due to the society they lived in and dealt with. As for English and Kurdish languages, they had acquired them due to their studying in a private English studying school.

The interview was conducted via Viber application. During the interview some additional questions have been raised besides the ones mentioned in 3.4. The interview had offered a chance for comparison of the different situations and cultural backgrounds of each type of participants (simultaneous and successive bilinguals) and the effects of being bilingual on their social and personal skills.

Table 1 Demographic Background of the Participants

Participants	Females	Males	Participants' Origins	Number of Participants' Origins
14	10	4	Kurds	6
			Arabs	3
			Assyrians	5

Table 2 Types of Bilingual Participants

Successive Bilinguals		Simultaneous Bilinguals
Kurdish/English speakers	Arabic/English Speakers	Assyrian/English Speakers
6 Participants	3 Participants	5 Participants

3.3 Methods of Analysis

The data collected from the participants were all recorded and analyzed based on the study's questions, with regarding the participants' different backgrounds.

Hamel et al (1993) mention the existence of many tools to collect data and analyze them for case studies; like interview, observation of the participants, and finally field studies.

A sociological viewpoint is that a case study tries to emphasize the characteristics of social interactions of life according to Hamel et al. (1993). It is possible to view bilingualism from a sociological perspective since language is a means to communicate through in social life. Thus, the date of this study is analyzed sociologically.

3.4 The Interview

The questions of the interview were constructed as semi-structured, which means some of the questions were open-ended questions and some others were close-ended questions that had options for the participants to choose. This method was followed for collecting more data about the study's questions. The interview questions were as the following:

1. Why do you use two or three languages? because of having different parents? the school you study in? the society you live in? both school and society? or all the above-mentioned reasons?

2. Which language you would like to use the most?

3. In what situations you use each language?

4. What are the benefits of being bilingual?

5. What are the disadvantages of being bilingual?

6. Do you use English language the most because your friends would not understand you if you use another? Or because you like expressing yourself in English?

4 Three Case Studies on the Effect of Bilingualism on Students

4.1 Backgrounds of the Participants

The number of participants interviewed were fourteen. four males and ten females. They come from three different origins, Kurds, Assyrians, and Arabs. They have been studying in CSM (Classical School of Medes) private school since kindergarten, as they reached 8th grade by now. This group of students consisted of two types of bilingualism, the Assyrian- English speakers were simultaneous bilinguals, this particular group acquired Assyrian and Arabic since their childhood at the same time almost. Assyrian language from their parents and Arabic from society. As they started their study in private school and started acquiring English language, now the main two languages they use mostly are English at school and Assyrian at home as their mother tongue.

The other two origins as Kurds and Arab participants were successive bilinguals, they acquired the second language at school, these two groups did not learn both languages at the same time. The Kurd participants use Kurdish language at home as their mother tongue for having Kurdish parents and English at school, as for the Arab participants, they use Arabic language at home as their mother tongue for having Arab parents and English at school. The interview lasted for 1 (one) hour. Each group of participants live in an area where their mother tongue is spoken in Erbil city.

4.2 Bilingualism Factors

The data received from the interview reveals the factors that helped produce bilingual speakers in the society, weather they are social, economic, or educational factors.

One of the main reasons for the Arab and Assyrian participants to become bilingual was because of their immigration to Erbil due to economic, or political reasons. The Kurd participants became bilingual due to educational reasons, as they started studying in English private schools rather than applying for public Kurdish schools.

As a result of these above-mentioned factors, the different origin of students as they

interact as a daily basis in school, whether it is in English or any other local language like Kurdish or Arabic, they gradually start to acquire the new language unconsciously and they start practicing it with their different language speaking classmates. Both group of participants Assyrian and Arabs learnt Kurdish language in schools, through communication as a daily basis, although they rarely use it, except for special occasions, but they have a good comprehension when it comes to understanding it.

As the Kurdish participants like the rest of the other two groups also started acquiring their Assyrian and Arab classmates' language, which is Arabic, but only for special occasion, when they most need it, besides the English language that the three types of participants eventually acquire, and will be used as a lingua franca between the different origins of the students.

4.3 The Mindset of the Participants of Bilingualism

The interview shows through the extra questions raised while interviewing the participants that their attitude towards being bilingual are at most cases positive, they rarely find difficulties, as all the three languages are if not totally almost most of them understood or controlled by the three types of participants. Their parents aim at studying in an English private school as they stated is for educational purposes for the children's future, as English is used or required for most of the jobs applied to nowadays, thus their parents took that into their consideration.

Another attitude of the students is that they appreciate the social chances they have to make new friends and familiarize with new cultures and that the differences have never been a problem, but a welcome to learn new aspects of their daily life and future.

4.4 The Participants' Viewpoint of Advantages and Disadvantages of Bilingualism

The three case studies participants had agreed upon the status of bilingualism as having more advantages than disadvantages. Such as; they assume that becoming a bilingual speaker offers more opportunities for them to become what their dreams require and raises their interest to learn a new language. Bilingualism helps them acquire a new language easier. The students have mentioned that getting familiarized

with the cultural background of another language speakers had opened their minds to accept, embrace, and respect the differences.

Most students believe that there is little or no disadvantage to bilingualism. They think it is confusing when they have to translate a word in their language to another language as they become unable to find the exact word for it, that is due to lexical gap exists in languages.

4.5 Result Discussion

The participants in the three case studies have quite different statuses. In the Kurdish/English speaking students, Kurdish is their mother tongue in the city or the area they live in, that everyone speaks it for daily communications. But the second language use, which is Arabic for them; almost no one uses it in their environment. Therefore, for the Kurdish/English speakers learning a second language like Arabic is challenging. Because as they mentioned it is not considered as a necessary language to be communicated by.

In the group Arabic/English speaking students, the Arab speakers have a totally opposite situation. They use Arabic and English as the two main languages, and for them both languages are equivalently significant. What helps them have a natural communication in a society where Arabic language is considered as a second language; is the aid of their parents. While the Assyrian/English speaking group of students use both Assyrian and English as the official languages to communicate through with different origins of people in the society and use Arabic more than Kurdish in most cases as compared.

Depending on the data collected from the participants and the literature review, the answers are revealed to all the three main interview's questions. The first question was: "You know two or three languages because of, having different parents? the school you study in? the society you live in? both school and society? all the above-mentioned reasons?". The participants had answered this question as generally most of them acquired the second language from society and the school they studied in.

The second question was "Which language you would like to use the most?" Based on the interview data and the background literature, the answer depends a lot on

their emotional attitude to the language they first learnt had and grew up with, thus they all mentioned their mother tongue.

The answer to the third question "In what situations you use each language?" based on the findings, is simply in school. English language is used and with their friends, but at home each use their own mother tongue not the other way around. The answer to the fourth and fifth question "What are the benefits of being bilingual? What are the disadvantages of being bilingual?" was their ability to communicate in any situation they face, having more friends, expanding their minds, acquiring more social skills. Still, the status of bilingualism has more advantages.

Usually, one of the biggest issues is the importance of the use of mother tongue in the home country. It is almost always more difficult to teach a child a minority language which he or she might find unimportant than to teach him or her two major or official languages. As for the disadvantages they stated that they only face problems while translating for not finding the exact synonym that is supposed to mean the intended word.

5 Conclusion

This study can be concluded through the following:

- The most significant conclusions of this work was the fact that although English language dominated the nowadays society in every aspect, but the students tended to use their mother tongue the most, and this belongs to their emotional attitude(affiliation) to their nation or origin.
- According to the participants' responses the status of bilingualism has more advantages than disadvantages.
- The status of bilingualism and the use of English outside home for the situations they face and the interaction with different people they familiarize with can be considered as a threat for Kurdish language use in the society.
- The issue that the mother tongue use decreases, due to the use of English language as a standard one everywhere, can be related to political reasons rather than sociological reasons.

5.1 Suggestions

1. To investigate about disadvantages of bilingualism, it is suggested to conduct more practical studies about the status of bilingualism.

2. This title can be more explored by conducting experiments of mastering a foreign language between bilinguals and multi-linguals.

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دۆخی بایلینگوالیزم له قووتابخانه ناوەندیەکانی شاری هەولێر

پـوخـتـه:

ئەو فاکتەرانەی که وادەکات کەسێک زمانێکی تایبەت بەکاربێنێت لەکاتێکی تایبەت دا جێگەی پرسیاره بۆ لێکۆڵینەوه. بۆچی خەڵک خواستی لەسەر بەکارهێنانی زمانێکه زیاتر له زمانێکی تر. چی وادەکات کۆدەکات بگۆرن له زمانێکەوه بۆ زمانێکی تر، وه بۆچی هەندێ جار خواستیان لەسەر بەکارهێنانی

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زمانێکه کەله دوو زمانی تر پێکهاتووه، بەگۆڕین له یەکێکەوه بۆ یەکێکی تر یان تێکەڵکردنیان؟ ئەو پرسیارانه وەڵامدراونەتەوه لەم توێژینەوەیەدا به شیکارکردن و تاووتوێژکردنی دۆخی بایلینگوالیزم له قوتابخانەی تایبەتی CSM. کاریگەری و دەرئەنجامه باش و خراپەکانی ووردبینی لەسەر کراوه. هەروەها داتاکان شیکراونەتەوه بەبەکارهێنانی ئامرازی چاوپێکەوتن لەسەر ئەو کێشەی جێگەی لێکۆڵینەوەیه له دیدگای کۆمەڵایەتی زمانەوانی. ئەنجامی توێژینەوەکه دەریدەخات که بایلینگوالیزم دەرئەنجامی باشی زیاتره و کەمێک یان هیچ دەرئەنجامێکی خراپی نیه بۆ قووتابیەکانی قوتابخانەی تایبەت. هەروەها ئەو قووتابخانه تایبەتانەی به زمانی ئینگلیزی دەخوێنن بەکارهێنانی زمانی کوردی لەناو کۆمەڵگا کەمدەکاتەوه.

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مكانة ثنائية اللغة في مدارس المتوسطة في مدينة اربيل

الملخص:

الأسباب الذي تؤدي الى استخدام لغة معينة من قبل الشخص في وقت معين سؤال للتدريس والبحث. لماذا يفضلون بعض الأشخاص استخدام لغة واحدة اكثر من غيره، ماذا يسبب تغير الكود من لغة الى لغة أخرى. ولماذا أحيانا يفضلون استخدام لغة يتكون من لغتين آو يمزجون بين الغتين؟ آجوبة هذه الأسئلة ذكرت في هذا البحث بالمناقشة والتحليل مكانة الثنائية اللغة في مدرسة اخصوصية اسمه CSM . التأثيرات وميزات و سلبيات ركزت عليه في هذه الدراسة ، والداتا جمعت من خلال استخدام أداة البحث اللي هي مقابلة من وجهة نظر اجتماعية لغوية. يستنتج من خلال تحاليل النتائج المقابلات ان الطلاب الذين يتقنون استخدام اللغتين تأكدوا من ميزاته أكثر وقليل من السلبيات أو لا شيء للطلاب في المدارس الخصوصية، وأيضا أكدوا أن المدارس الخصوصية الذين يدرسون باللغة الإنكليزية أو الأجنبية يقلون أستخدام اللغة الكوردية في المجتمع.