

Becoming Bilingual: A View Towards Communicative Competence

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Abstract: The phenomenon of foreign language mastery shall always be the main issue in the pedagogy since it has numerous advantages in human life, especially in terms of economic value. The definition of bilingualism is connected with the speaking of two languages or expression in two languages and it can be used to describe societies or individuals (Lyon, 1995). The way that a bilingual adapts to a certain condition leads to a certain phenomenon, which is quite interesting to analyze. The texture of the bilingual's creativity is essentially the result of the process of translation and transcreation, and insightful approaches to stylistics-its theory and methodology must be take into consideration. When people speak more than one languages, they may have different levels of proficiency in each of the languages, and use them for very different social purposes and in different situations. The languages that a bilingual speaks affect each other in various ways, so much that there is a regular study of what happens when one language comes into contact with another. In educational setting, it is important to know how a bilingual's first language may affect the function of other languages. The paper will discuss the phenomenon of bilingual and the implication towards communicative competence which would consists, minimally, of four areas of knowledge and skills; grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence.

Key words: bilingual, communicative competence

English as a foreign language has been used for various reasons in certain communities in this country. The phenomenon creates a certain condition, which leads to the fact that some people use it as the second language. For instance in the academic level, some of the scholars are quite familiar with English and use it as the minor means for communicating. Another fact shows that the people involved in the main level of management also use code-mixing and code-switching in Indonesian and English as media to conduct their daily activities relates to their occupations. According to Weinreich (1963), the ideal bilingual switches from one language to the other according to appropriate changes in speech situation.

On the individual level, usually, if adult speakers have to learn another language, they try to learn it in its entirety. Typically, this results in a foreign accent and errors in discourse, syntax, and vocabulary (Chaika, 1994). Commonly a first language is used as filter to acquire a second language. Therefore the accent of the target language is quite different in some respects. As Krashen stated:

The amount of formal education the speaker has received does not seem to be a determining factor in whether or not an accent is retained, although the amount of formal instruction specifically in the new language may be, apparently because adults need somewhat simplified input to help them to acquire the second language (Krashen 1973, in Chaika, 1994).

According to Brown (1980), the second language learners set a certain process in which compared to the first language learners:

"The learner was looked on not as a producer of malformed, imperfect language replete with mistakes, but as an intelligent and creative being proceeding through logical, systematic stages of acquisition, creatively upon his linguistic environment as he encounters its forms and functions in meaningful contexts. By a gradual process of trial and error and hypothesis testing, the learner slowly and tediously succeeds in establishing closer and closer approximations to the system used by native speakers of the language".

Taking into account this complexity, the effort involved, and great variety of circumstances in which learners find themselves, it is not surprising that many if not most learners may not find that pushing on towards a perfect command of the language is simply too much. As the American

linguist Larry Selinker pointed out, most learners (perhaps as many as 95 per cent) reach a point where obstacles towards further progress simply outweigh the perceived benefits of making further efforts to reach this perfect 'end state', in which they use a 'simplification' process. It is caused by the limited processing space, consequently they cannot cope with the total complexity of a language system (Ellis, 1985). He points out that it is important to note that fossilizable structures tend to remain as potential performance, reemerging in the productive performance of an IL even when seemingly eradicated (Selinker, 1988). Vigil and Oller emphasize the main source of fossilization:

It is argued that expected negative feedback on the cognitive dimension of language usage is the principal de-stabilizing factor in the development of the learner's grammar. When the configuration of feedback to the learner becomes predominantly accepted positive feedback on the cognitive dimension it is predicted that the learner's level of proficiency will tend to fossilize. Thus, the tendency toward fossilization of either correct or incorrect forms is governed by feedback principally on the cognitive dimension. However, if feedback on the affective dimension is not predominantly as expected, and predominantly positive, the feedback on the cognitive dimension will lose much of its force (Selinker, 1988)

The other obstacle of acquiring a second language lies on the latent structure. Initially it was proposed by Weinrich (Selinker, 1988) that some important aspects of psychological structure in the theory of second language acquisition mentioned the '*interlingual identification*'. A bilingual learner would continuously compare their current, in-progress, under-construction or interlanguage, version with the target variety. As the learner progresses, and the gap between their first language and the second narrows, they find that it becomes harder to notice the discrepancy between the two. Selinker himself suggests that various reasons could be at work. One was when the learner believed that they don't need to develop their interlanguage any further – a matter of motivation.

The learner's developing rule system: interlanguage, a term coined by Selinker refers to 'the systematic knowledge of a second language which is independent of both the learner's first language and the target language' (Ellis, 1985). The concept of interlanguage involves a number of premises about second language acquisition. Interlanguage is a system

of abstract linguistic rules or mental grammar which the learner constructs and underlies comprehension and production. Adult learners may achieve a successfully native speaker proficiency in the target language because they continue to make use of the acquisition devices (Ellis, 1985).

Learners use a variety of learning strategies to push forward their interlanguages and different kinds of learner errors reflect different strategies. An interlanguage grammar can stop evolving, the phenomenon previously referred to as fossilization, and learners can even go backwards. Interlanguage is used here in the sense of the learner's developing rule system, which underlies accuracy and complexity.

THEORETICAL ISSUES OF BILINGUAL LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The Second language acquisition is characterized by a natural sequence of development, but the order of development varies in details. It is also important to note that linguistic input contributes to the process of acquisition at any point of development (Ellis, 1989). It raises the questions *how* it is acquired and *when* it is acquired. Some experts believe the existence of critical period for acquiring a foreign language. As Lenneberg (Aitchison, 1989) argued that humans have a narrow critical period set-aside by the nature for the acquisition for the language. In his view, it lasts from toddler time to adolescence:

Between the ages of two and three years language emerges by an interaction of maturation and self-programmed learning. Between the ages of three and the early teens the possibility for primary language acquisition continues to be good; the individual appears to be most sensitive to stimuli at this time and to preserve some innate flexibility for the organization of brain functions to carry out the complex integration of sub process necessary for the smooth elaboration of speech and language. After puberty, the ability for self-organization and adjustment to the physiological demands of verbal behavior quickly declines. The brain behaves as if it had become set in its ways and primary, basic skills not acquired by the time usually remain deficient for life (Lenneberg, in Aitchison, 1989).

Scovel (1988) mentioned that speech, by which he means phonological output of language, is subject to a critical period also, supports the idea. If a language is not heard or spoken before puberty, he

claims, the speaker will not achieve perfect pronunciation. However, other aspects of language - vocabulary and syntax, for example, are free from any ultimate learning period:

Indeed, from the experimental studies... we see that regardless of how quickly or slowly you acquire a second language, if you pick it up after the age of 10 to 12, you end up easily identified as a non native speaker of that language (Scovel, in Chaika, 1994).

Lenneberg (Hamers 1983) hypothesized the existence of critical period for language which terminates with neuropsychological maturity, that is, at around puberty. It may imply that all language acquisition, be it L1 or L2 beyond the critical period will be qualitatively different from childhood language acquisition.

There is a general agreement that younger children acquire a more native-like pronunciation than older learners do. For other skills the evidence is contradictory: older children seem to acquire L2 morphology and Syntax faster than younger ones and are better at auditory comprehension (Krashen, Long & Scarcella, 1979 in Hamers, 1983). However, all of the studies were conducted in a classroom setting and the L2 input varies widely. In contrast, there is evidence that in a natural setting early L2 acquisition is more likely to lead in the long run to native like competence in all language skills.

Based on the assumption of the critical period, the theory of bilingual language acquisition relates to the young learners. Merrill Swain (1972 in Lyon 1996) suggest that there is no fundamental difference between a child's acquisition of one language and their acquisition of two:

All children learn language using one language store, and later bilingual children separate this into identifiable language system according to the speaker-situation, much as monolingual children learn to separate codes within their native language according to the speaker situation.

The first theory proposed by Volterra and Taeschner (Lyon, 1996) is a three stage model for the Gradual Differentiation Theory. Initially the child has one lexical system with words from both languages. Next the child recognizes that there are two lexical systems but uses both in one syntactic system. Finally, the child has two linguistic codes each

comprising a separate syntax and lexicon. The theory uses evidence of language mixing for support. It is also reported that children in bilingual settings have one language store and progressively separate their language.

An alternative theory postulates that bilingual children develop separate linguistic systems from the beginning, or at least from early in their language acquisition and that they remain separate apart from some borrowing of words and phrases. Padilla and Liebman (Lyon 1996) suggested that children use two systems that are distinct phonologically, lexically, and syntactically from the beginning. They found little mixing, it is about 2% of utterances in their corpus were mixed, and that the structural consistency of utterances was maintained.

Tabel 1. Two Models of Bilingual Language Acquisition (Lyon, 1996)

GRADUAL DIFFERENTIATION MODEL (Volterra & Taeschner, 1978)

	L1 (lexicon)	L1 (lexicon & syntatic system)
L1 + L2	L1 + L2 (syntatic system)	
	L2 (lexicon)	L2 (lexicon & syntatic system)
Mixing	syntatic fusion?	Separation

SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT MODEL (Padilla & Lindholm, 1975)

L1 (lexicon)	----->	L1 (lexicon and syntatic system)
L2 (lexicon)	----->	L2 (lexicon and syntatic system)

THE IMPLICATION OF BILINGUALISM TOWARDS SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

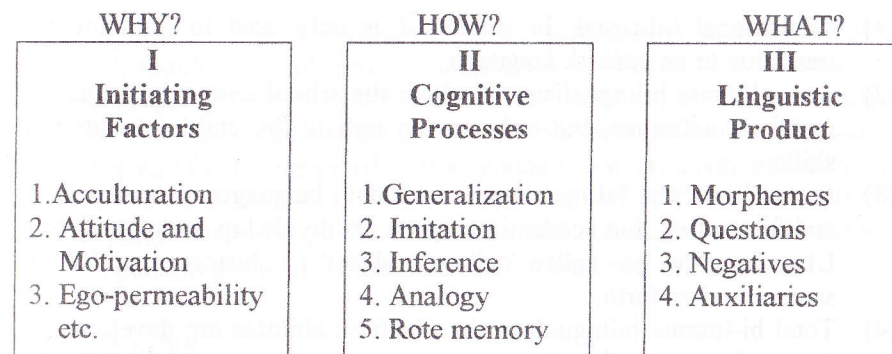
The phenomenon of English teaching becomes a compulsory subject in most elementary schools in some big cities. It leads to the

circumstances of a small bilingual community in some respects. Most Indonesian children speak a typical mother tongue at the level of informal setting communication. They also speak Indonesian as a media at the formal level, that is, at the school community. Respectively the phenomenon contributes advantages to the children as individual at the bilingual setting, as Brown suggests his idea:

In a bilingual setting, for example, if a child has already learned one second language in childhood, then affectively, learning a third language might represent much less of a threat. Or such seeds may be independent of a bilingual setting; they may simply arise out of whatever combination of nature and nurture makes for the development of a strong ego (Brown, 1980)

It is clear that children learning two languages simultaneously acquire them by the use of similar strategies. They are learning two first languages and the key to success is in distinguishing separate contexts for the two languages. As, they previously learn from the environment about the difference concept of certain objects, for instance; omah/rumah, merah/red or ibu/ mother. The exposure of the surrounding has an important role in acquiring the target language. As Lambert (Brown, 1980) notes that such a bilingualism does not retard intelligence, but they have a language asset, are more facile at concept formation, and have a greater mental flexibility.

The learning process of second language requires some components that support the environment of acquiring the target language. As Schumann (Brown, 1980) suggests a schematic representation of the second language learning process in which three components interacted to give us a 'global look' at the second language learner. The process involves three questions about second language learning process; *Why?*, *How?*, *What?*.



Schumann's schematic representation of the second language learning process (Brown, 1980).

Unfortunately, there is no clear guidance for implementing English teaching to young learners in most formal education institutions in Indonesia. Since each of the schools carries out the process of teaching based on their own way. It has been discussed that the 'critical period' of acquiring the language will cease at the puberty. Therefore, focusing at the young learners for socializing a foreign language would give some advantages. It could be supported by the view of Functionalism that suggested language is a dynamic and open system, which means that the members of community exchange information (Bell, 1987).

The concept of 'bilingual education' is used to describe a variety of educational programs involving two or three more languages to varying degree (Hamers, 1990). Considering the definition, most of the programs of bilingual education fit into one of the three categories:

- (1) Instruction is given in both languages simultaneously;
- (2) Instruction is given first in L1, and the pupil is taught until such time when he is able to use L2 as a means of learning;
- (3) The largest part of instruction is given through L2 and L1 is introduced at a later stage, first as a subject and later as a medium of instruction

Fishman & Lovas (1970) suggested taxonomy based on a sociolinguistics perspective (Hamers, 1990). It comprises three large categories defined by three sets variable: intensity, goal, and status. In the first category, intensity, four types of bilingual programs are identified:

- (1) Transitional bilingual, in which L1 is only used to facilitate the transition to an unmark language.
- (2) mono-literate bilingualism, in which the school uses two languages in all its activities, but only one to initiate the child into literacy skills.
- (3) Partial bi-literate bilinguals, in which both languages are used orally and for writing, but academic subjects are divided in such a way that L1 is used for so-called 'cultural subject' i.e. history, and L2 for science and so forth.
- (4) Total bi-literate bilingualism, in which all abilities are developed in the two languages for all domains.

According to its goal, bilingual education can be divided into two:

- (1) compensatory programs, which the pupil is first schooled in his mother tongue in order to be better integrated mainstream education
- (2) enrichment program, which aim at developing an additive form of bilinguality
- (3) group-maintenance programs, which enhance the linguistic and cultural pluralism

The final set of variables, status, consists of four dimensions:

- (1) language of primary importance versus language of secondary importance in education
- (2) home language versus school language
- (3) major world language versus minor language
- (4) Institutionalized versus non-institutionalized language in community.

CONCLUSION

A wide variety of language situations exist nationally and internationally, some of which tend to promote bilingualism. Unfortunately, the obstacles of acquiring a foreign language are varied for some adult learners. It may lead to the phenomenon of failure for the learner to master a foreign language. Since, the value of being a bilingual would give some benefits for the individuals, there should be a way which promote the initial bilingual education program for young learners.

To conclude, I would like to stress the fact that there is no simple and

easy application of L2 acquisition to L2 teaching. A multi dimension approach should be combined to meet the need of learners' proficiency in foreign language. Some factors may be the hindrances of the bilingual program, such as social and psychological awareness of being a citizen in a certain nation. Bilingual education encountered criticism not only on patriotic but also on more narrowly technical grounds (Duighan, 2001). As the main stream of global world would be coming in the near future, the bilingual program should be taken into consideration.

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