

IDENTIFYING THE CONCEPT OF BILINGUALISM AND BILINGUALS THROUGH SEVEN BAKER'S DIMENSIONS OF BILINGUALISM

Mulyani

*STKIP Bina Bangsa Getsempena Banda Aceh, Indonesia
ummathary@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

The study is mainly aimed at investigating and analyzing the concept of bilingualism and bilinguals based on seven Baker's (2011) dimensions of bilingualism: ability, culture, context, age, use, elective bilingualism, and balance of two languages. All of the dimensions were discussed specifically and comparatively based on Baker's bilingualism dimensions related to the experience of learning second language (L2) of both participants. However, another dimension, development, is not discussed in this study since there was insufficient information and no correlation to the participants' experience in learning L2. There were two participants involved in this study: two Australians coming from different backgrounds and experiences of learning L2. The data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews using both closed-question and open-question methods. The findings indicated that it was arduous to specify to what extent the concept of bilingualism and bilinguals were.

Keywords: *bilingualism; bilinguals; second language; Baker's dimensions*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of bilingualism seems easy to define at first glance. However, there are many definitions of bilingualism specified by many language experts. In Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2012) bilingualism is defined as "the ability to speak two languages or the frequent use (as by a community) of two languages". Similarly, Grosjean argues (as cited in Baker, 2011) that individuals or people who

are able to use two or more than one language or dialect in their daily lives basis are considered as bilingual persons; yet, is not clear enough since there is no specific information whether those people are able to master both of the language fluently or not. Grosjean's definition seems unclear whether someone must be able to master all language skills perfectly to be judged as bilinguals or not. In contrast, what Edwards (2004) means about bilingualism is that everyone is counted as bilingual if s/he has more or less two words or utterances used in another language which is found flexible, easy, and simple to specify.

Moreover, there are conditions influencing someone being a bilingual person, such as close proximity, as indicated by Myers-Scotton (2006, p. 47) whereby relationship built with other people closely like marrying another person from different country, living in bilingual nations, living in borders areas, living in multi-ethnic urban areas, engaging in an occupation involving many contacts with other member groups, or having family outside one's ethnic group. Meanwhile, there are other factors, according to Baker (2011), promoting someone or people to become bilinguals or multilinguals such as political, economic, employment, immigration, mixed marriage or geographical cases which then will be related to any correlated dimensions of bilingualism set down by Baker (2011).

Furthermore, sometimes there are obstacles appeared during the process of bilinguals in learning second language (L2). The obstacles are probably dealing with less exposure to the target language and code switching as well between native language and L2 or additional languages, for example L2 learners usually have difficulty when they want to process the idea from one language to be translated into other languages i.e., certain utterances which are not frequently used or listened to by them before.

METHODS

The method applied in this study was a qualitative method which also used theoretical approach as the basis of study. The researcher thought it useful to investigate bilingual participants through interviews in order to make clear to what extent the concept of bilingualism were and the cases related to bilingualism and

bilinguals, or as questioned by Wei (2000, p. 5) “should bilingualism be measured by how fluent people are in two languages? Or should bilinguals be only those people who have equal competence in both languages?”. This interview was taken face-to-face in Australia in 2012 using both closed-question and open-question method in which any responses from the participants were combination of short, and not limited and controlled respectively. The questions consisted of more or less 20. For the purpose of keeping the participant’s secret identity, the pseudonym names are used; “Dominique” and “Jessica”. This study argues that in determining or investigating the extent of bilingualism and bilinguals’ concept, it should be considered based on the dimensions of bilingualism set out by Baker (2011) including ability, culture, context, age, use, elective bilingualism, and balance of two languages.

Participants of the Study

Two participants mentioned before as the subjects of this study came from different backgrounds and had different experiences of learning L2. The first participant, Dominique, was a-fifty six-year-old Australian female officer at an educational institution in Australia and had been in Indonesia for 8 years for professional and personal reasons. She was able to speak two languages quite equally, English as the mother tongue and Indonesian as the second language. She experienced her L2 through learning both from the formal institution provided by her workplace and from the environment in which she stayed. She was married to an Indonesian man and had family with two children in Indonesia for a couple years before she and her family moved back to Australia. Admittedly, her husband and her husband’s parents were quite frequent to assist her in learning L2. In order to maintain her L2, Dominique usually attends the Australian Indonesian Association (AIA) held once a month in different places of the members in Australia.

On the other hand, the second participant, Jessica, was a-twenty-year-old Afghani student at one of Australian universities, coming to Australia as a refugee due to war and conflict in Afghanistan. She was able to use three languages: Farsi, English, and Urdu (L1, L2, and L3) equally. Jessica experienced learning an L2

through educational process in the Australian school settings when she was about 12 or 13 years old. She learned L2 through listening to any Australian programs in television, reading English books, having intense interaction with her Australian classmates whereby they understood and helped her very much in learning that language. Her family provided her a great deal support to learn L2 such as enrolling her to a public secondary school and English courses until she was in undergraduate level in Australia. In order to maintain her L1, Jessica usually uses the language frequently with her core family members when she is at home.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS ON BAKER'S DIMENSIONS

This study discusses the result of interviews conducted based on seven dimensions of bilingualism established by Baker (2011): ability, culture, context, age, use, elective bilingualism, and balance of two languages. All of the dimensions are discussed specifically and comparatively based on Baker's bilingualism dimensions related to the experiences of learning L2 of both the interviewees. There is one dimension which is not discussed here, development, since it is not correlated to both participants' experiences of learning their L2. It is expected that by analyzing the transcript interview of the two participants based on the dimensions mentioned by Baker, the understanding of to what extent the concept of bilingualism and bilinguals will be clear at the end of this study.

Culture

In the dimension of culture, both participants showed similar responses but in different cases. Baker (2011) argues that bicultural or multicultural can be occurred to bilinguals. He adds that there is a possibility that someone is able to have high proficiency in mastering two languages but s/he tends to be monocultural. Dominique stated that by learning L2, she also learned its culture, for example, she pointed out in terms of attitudes that "using the left hand to take food or pay for something is offensive in Indonesia". Similarly, Jessica indicated that it was enjoyable to learn the culture alongside L2 itself. Nevertheless, as an immigrant person, she may have had a process of acculturation of culture in which she lives in and learns the majority language, English. The acculturation of culture likely can happen when

bilinguals have contact with a different culture then it becomes emerging such as life style in the way of dressing, having food, etc. What can be revealed from both participants is that they are able to adjust themselves either feelings or attitudes towards the other cultures of their L2. So, they have cross-cultural awareness and empathy in biculturalism or multiculturalism even though they tend to be monocultural in some aspects such as religion, food, clothing, tradition and custom, gender, and ethnicity.

In the case of language and culture that connects with each other or not, Brown and Eisterhold (2004) have a different point of view, namely it is not essential that language and culture have a connection since they consider that sometimes people use the language but they do not participate in or take into account with the culture or vice versa. Somehow, in one side that viewpoint is true but in another side it is not really logical as it is well known that by learning the language people will also automatically learn the culture itself.

Context

Both participants revealed different responses to the dimension of context. Baker (2011) maintains that there are endogenous and exogenous communities existing, whereby bilinguals and multilinguals can live in both those communities. Endogenous community is defined as the context of group where more than one language are used by bilinguals and multilinguals on their daily basis. Meanwhile, exogenous community is defined as the context of group where there is no an L2 community existed (Baker, 2011). Dominique asserted that she has lived and worked currently in the multilingual endogenous community, Australia, as her originated country. Yet, for her first learning L2, she lived in Indonesia for quite a long time about 8 years where multilingual and multicultural conditions occurred even with the local languages but she could not find the exogenous community. She can be categorized into additive context where she learned an L2 without losing her first language (L1). Additive context refers to when bilinguals add one or more languages at no influence to L1 while there is also subtractive context which is defined as a condition whereby L2 or majority language may replace L1 (e.g. Indonesian

language as L1 being replaced by English in Australia) (Baker, 2011). On the other hand, Jessica described that she has lived in a multilingual country but there was the rareness of her L1 community. So, based on Baker's (2011) viewpoint, Jessica can be involved in the subtractive context and as the bilingual who lives in endogenous community, Australia.

Use

Bilingual participants have dissimilar domains of where L1 and L2 are used. Baker (2011) asserts that there are various domains where an L2 is practiced, such as home, street, school, email, and phone, and that language used in different purposes and places such as L1 is used at home while an L2 is used at school. Both participants had different domains in using their L2. Dominique pointed that she used her L2 because of her occupation and mixed marriage in Indonesia. In this country, she usually used the language and had intense contact with people in the street such as neighbors and friends, in the market such as sellers, at home such as nucleus family members, and in the workplace such as work colleagues. Related to Dominique's case, Myers-Scotton (2006) argues that when there is motivation of bilinguals for learning a language for getting a job, her motivation is connected to the economic advancement case. On the other side, Jessica stated that she used an L2 based on the place where she lived and studied in her L2 country, Australia. In this point, it is correlated to the social case. Nevertheless, she also used L2 because of the political case since she and her family came to Australia in order to survive from the war in their home country, Afghanistan. Myers-Scotton (2006, p.54) asserts that "other migrants have moved from one country to the next because they are simply looking for a better life whereby some of them are political refugees". Such cases reflect the identity in different domains.

In regard to identity issues, speakers are sometimes able to specify themselves as bilinguals, or other people may judge whether those speakers are bilinguals or not (Myers-Scotton, 2006, p. 39). In another case, there are also those who are able to communicate in two languages but they do not admit that they are bilingual persons. The problems are likely due to their reluctance to admit their L2 as

the language but rather as the dialect. These kind of people may believe that the utterances, styles and accents they use are more linked to dialect not to language. In terms of the difference between language and dialect, Brown and Eisterhold (2004) argue that language and dialect is dissimilar that language is generally correlated with social and political cases in which it has a long history, while dialect based on accent, word choice, and grammar. In Aceh, Indonesia, for example, the local languages used and spoken are various in terms of dialect. Each of the areas in Aceh has its own dialect, accent and word choice. For example, the words and accent used and spoken in North Aceh is different with the words and accent used and spoken in Great Aceh even though it is the same language, Acehnese language.

Ability

Both participants exposed different responses towards skill ability of L2 they learned. Baker (2011) argues that there are active bilinguals who actively produce the language either in speaking or in writing skills, called productive competence, and passive bilinguals who rarely or passively use the language both in reading and listening skills. Dominique stated that when she dealt with her occupation and stayed in Indonesia for quite a long time, she demonstrated listening and speaking skills faster than writing and reading since there was no time for her to focus much on writing and reading skills. Meanwhile, Jessica pointed that she was able to demonstrate all the four skills well of her L2 since she dealt with the language all the time either in her studies or her part-time workplace. So, Jessica can be potentially regarded as a proficient speaker who is able to master both competences: productive and receptive. What indicated by Dominique is in line with what Valdes et al. argue (cited in Baker, 2011) that individual's ability is varied with other speakers in their dominance and development in learning an L2. Meanwhile, Wei (2000) asserts that not all bilinguals have an equal mastery of all four skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) in both languages they use. He adds that in order to know to what extent bilinguals' ability is, it is important to do testing towards their four skills in both languages separately. Similarly, Romaine (1995) also suggests that

in order to find the degree of bilinguals' skills in both languages, it is required to assess their proficiency in four skills and levels (grammatical, lexical, semantic, etc.). In fact, there is a real condition that is widely known that only English language providing language tests such as IELTS, TOEFL, TOIEC, etc. to identify bilinguals' ability on the four skills while it is so rare found in non-English-languages providing specific test for all the four skills, and even it can be said almost none.

Age

Related to the dimension of age, both of the participants provided different responses from the question dealing with younger and older age learners. Jessica described that she experienced learning her L2 at the teenage year when she was 12 or 13 years old in secondary school in one of Australian public schools. On the other hand, Dominique, based on her knowledge, argued that to be completely bilinguals, children should learn L2 before the age of 10, while learning after that children tend to translate through L1. In fact, Dominique admitted that she and her husband tried to lead and ask their children to learn her L2 when they were children but it was not so successful because of their lack of internal motivation. What was stated by the Dominique about children age of learning L2 is correlated to what reviewed by Marinova-Todd et al., Singleton, Singleton and Ryan, and Cenoz (cited in Baker, 2011, p. 124) that children or younger learners have high opportunity to master an L2 in their childhood age proficiently and effectively because of their length of exposure to the language than the older learners. However, what was experienced by Jessica in learning an L2 appears true on the other side since she learned the language directly or being exposed to that language in which it was used widely even though she was not a child anymore.

Discussing about age, it is relevant to the second language acquisition field. According to Baker (2011), bilinguals children or adults, who acquire their L1, L2, and the next other languages not in the same time but in the stages, whether acquired in the formal or informal settings, are involved in sequential acquisition of bilingualism. What is proposed by Baker is correlated to what experienced by both

the participants even if it is realized that not all bilinguals who learn another language sequentially are successful and proficient in their L2.

Elective Bilingualism

Most experts have categorized bilinguals into two categories, elective and circumstantial bilinguals. Valdes et al. (2006) assert that elective bilinguals are referred to additive bilinguals and circumstantial bilinguals are referred to subtractive bilinguals. They indicate that elective bilinguals are defined as individuals who elect to learn another language, for example, in the workplaces or in the school settings. It is implied that the bilinguals only elect to learn another language or foreign language for the purpose of not intending to live and work permanently in the foreign language country, so it is not required to use foreign or additional language in order to be survived (Valdes et al., 2006). They add, on the other hand, circumstantial bilinguals are specified as individuals who learn another language or additional languages because of the condition or circumstance in order to be able to survive in the majority language where they live (e.g. immigrants live in Australia or United States). Dominique is the individual who came from majority language group and chose to learn Indonesian language as her L2 when she was in her workplace in Indonesia. In this point, she can be regarded as an additive bilingual in the circle of elective bilingualism in which she added and elected to learn L2 without losing her L1 since she lives in her L1 or majority language country (Australia) in the current time.

Meanwhile, Jessica showed a different standpoint. She is from the minority language group, Afghanistan, coming to Australia as the immigrant for surviving life from the war and conflict in her originated country and for surviving life to live in the majority language country like Australia as well. According to Valdes et al. (2006), Jessica can be categorized as a circumstantial bilingual referred to subtractive bilingualism as she learned another language because her L1 was insufficient to meet her educational and employment requirements and the communicative needs in the community where she lived in. In this case, her L1 is in danger of being subtractive language. However, she argued that she has been able to maintain her

L1 by using it at home with the members of her family. In the point of danger of being subtractive language, somehow it seems true that when someone goes to another region outside of his/her country s/he will subconsciously be influenced and interfered by the language in that region, for example, English language in English-speaking country, automatically his/her L1 will be threatened to be subtractive language unless s/he has its big community which uses that language intensely.

Balance of Two Languages

In terms of the dimension of balance of two languages, both interviewees revealed highly different responses to the question dealing with dominant and balanced bilinguals. Dominique can be potentially pointed as a bilingual who uses one language dominantly namely her L1-English while her L2 is not frequently used. Then, why is it dominant? The reason is as argued by Baker (2011) that it is rare either bilingual or multilingual persons use or have equivalent ability to use their two or more languages. Another reason is since she lives and works in her L1 country currently, her L1 evolves dominantly while her L2 is not optimally used in her daily basis since the opportunity to use that language is not sufficiently provided. Jessica, on the other hand, can be regarded as a bilingual who equally uses her both languages, mother tongue and L2 as she maximally use her mother tongue at home with her parents and other nucleus families and her L2 at the educational and social contexts. Therefore, she can be categorized as a balanced bilingual person.

Based on the analysis and discussion of the interview results from both bilingual participants, it is shown that, in reality, the concept of bilingualism can be defined in many ways by the people depending on how the person interprets it and the context of the language in which it is used as well. Thus, it can be concluded that a bilingual person is an individual who uses two languages and able to perform the four language skills approximately the same. However, both of the participants in this study are in line with what Grosjean (cited in Baker, 2011) said about the bilingual person definition. Dominique considered herself as a bilingual person because that she was able to function comfortably in both languages, mother tongue and Indonesian. Likewise, Jessica also judged herself as a bilingual person

as she admitted that she had good command of using three languages almost equally: Farsi, English, and Urdu. Meanwhile, Jessica did not inform much about her L3 (Urdu); it can be seen through the world map that Afghanistan is located in the north and west of Pakistan which uses Urdu as the official language. Hence, there is a possibility in which the language of neighbor country influences or spreads through the border.

CONCLUSION

In summary, from the investigation and analysis conducted, it is found that it is not very easy to specify to what extent the concept of bilingualism and bilinguals is. However, through this study, both participants are bilinguals living in bilingualism contexts and it is very worthy to define and to know more deeply about both of them when the writer took the consideration in terms of seven dimensions of bilingualism established by Baker (2011): age, ability, use, culture, context, balance of two languages, and elective bilingualism. Unfortunately, there is one dimension which was not discussed in this study, development, since there was insufficient information and no correlation to the participants' experiences in learning their L2. It is recommended that in order to have effective and appropriate results for the next or another study on this area, further studies may include all the eight dimensions where it is related and needed.

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