REVISITING BILINGUAL EDUCATION TO TARGET GLOBAL CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Globalisation demands people to move across boundaries. Thus, socioculturally, there is a high urgency of improving cross-cultural understanding. Emerging racial riots elucidate the fact that cross-cultural understanding is relatively low. Responding to the problems, this paper proposes bilingual education as a catalyst to foster cross-cultural understanding. By re-contextualising bilingual education with globalisation, this paper attempts to model two distinctive frameworks of bilingual education for developing and developed countries. Developing countries should incorporate English in the framework, since it is the empowering tool to take part in globalisation. On the other hand, developed countries should endorse a language other than English (LOTE) policy in the bilingual education framework. Finally, this paper further scrutinizes the advantages of implementing bilingual education in both categories of countries.

Introduction

Globalisation presumably demands people to communicate and move across boundaries. Consequently, mutual understanding among different countries and cultures should be built. A global language, English, emerges to bridge the gap. The global or international language serves as a lingua franca so that those who speak different mother tongues could exchange information and get the transaction done. But then, language per se is not enough.

Communication, vis-à-vis cross-cultural communication, does not rely solely on language, but also cross-cultural understanding. Understanding a culture means understanding its beliefs, values and norms embedded in the society. In a more overt level, for example, opening a speech in Indonesia undergoes different procedure compared to speech structure in Australia. In Indonesia’s culture, audience are layered, and have to be addressed systematically. In Australia, however, general addressing system such as ‘ladies and gentlemen’ is enough and appropriate. There tends to be discrepancy of understanding between the two, as they belong to different cultures. Lack of this cross-cultural understanding might lead to communication breakdown, even conflict. For example, in Cronulla, New South Wales, in 2005, there was a series of huge riots. Youth and adults were involved in brutal brawls. News and analysts reported that the fundamental cause of this riot was due to lack of cross-cultural understanding. This may show that although those involved in the riots could communicate by using global language, they did not have any mutual cross-cultural understanding. The case advocates a proposition that the existence of global language should be balanced with cross-cultural understanding.
This paper is not going to provide a strategic solution towards both problems. Rather, it proposes an alternative response from education perspective as a starting point to prepare youth to actively participate in the globalisation with a more global and mutual understanding. Education is not an instant solution offered to solve an economic problem. Rather, it is a long term investment for a nation through its young generation. Therefore, the central issue of this paper is that bilingual education contextualised by globalisation would empower developing countries in playing its role in globalisation and help developed countries to manage cross-cultural understanding. Its conceptual framework is illustrated in figure 1.

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Figure 1. Mapping out Bilingual Education in globalisation context
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From the above figure, this paper is going to answer the following questions: 1) how are the developing countries advantaged by English in the bilingual education?, and 2) how are the developed countries advantaged by Languages Other Than English (LOTE) in their bilingual education?

The Conundrum of Globalisation

Globalisation, defined by Gibson-Graham (1996 in Stromquist and Monkmann 2000: 4) is “a set of processes by which the world is rapidly being integrated into one economic space via increased international trade, the internalization of production and financial markets, the internalization of a commodity culture promoted by an increasingly networked global telecommunications system.” From the definition, it could be perceived that globalisation provides new patterns of trading and communication. In the sense that to sell a product, a company would have a wider market opportunity, the market does not stop only within the border of their own country. For example, McD, Starbucks, and ALDI can be found not only in New York or Frankfurt, but also in Australia and Asian countries. To that extent, globalisation is beneficial since it presents substantial opportunities for worldwide enhancement. Notwithstanding, such benefit is partial. Seemingly developed countries reap most of the benefits. They are able to integrate at a faster pace than the developing ones. This shows that the more capacity of integration a country has, the faster it would join in the
competitiveness of globalisation. Integrating capacity is supported by many elements, such as English communication skills, information technology, business management, and commercial know-how (Lin and Martin 2005). This different pace of integration contributes in building the wall between developed and developing countries.

There are certain descriptors of developed and developing countries. One of which is country’s income level. The following chart (chart 1) depicts the twentieth century of the world’s income level, adopted from The World Economic Outlook (IMF Working Paper, 2000). The chart represents countries which are ranked based on their level of income inequality, and they are separated into quartiles corresponding to low, middle-low, middle-high and high income quartiles.

According to the chart, it is obvious that the period of 1900 to 2000 has witnessed a marked income gap between the high income quartile, and the middle and low income quartiles. The study, with 42 countries as its data for the entire 20th century, concludes that output per capita has risen substantially, but its distribution among countries has become more and more unequal than those the at beginning of the century.

According to World Bank (www.worldbank.org), developed countries usually have high-income and large stock of physical capital in which most people have a high standard of living, good educational opportunities, as well as low birth-rate. These high-income countries approximately comprise 15 percent of the world’s population. Some of which are UK, US, Netherlands, Germany, Australia and Japan. In chart 1, developed countries are those belong to high-income quartile. On the other hand, some others are less integrating themselves into the global economy. As opposed to developed countries, developing and less-developed countries can be indicated as having middle or low levels of GNP per capita in which the people live in a moderately middle or low standard of living, middle or low literacy rate and high birth-rate. Brazil, Afghanistan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka are some of the examples. In chart 1, developing countries fall into the category of middle-high and middle-low income quartile, while less-developed countries presumably belong to low income quartile. This paper, however, classifies the world into two categories, i.e. developed and developing countries, with a rudimentary assumption that less-developed and developing
countries belong to the category of developing countries. This is aimed to categorize the implementation of the two distinctive frameworks of bilingual education with a consequence that less-developed and developing countries would generally adopt the same framework of bilingual education.

The inequality pattern of income level reflects two main interpretations. *First*, in a longitudinal sense, globalisation has witnessed an accelerated income growth of all income quartile. *Second*, the landslide gap between the low, middle, and high income quartile, however, becomes wider compared to those in the 1900. Although the low income quartile undergoes increase, its raise is nothing compared to the high income quartile. The income gap between the top and bottom has increased until 70 percent. This data means that the income of the top earning quartile grew much faster than that of the middle or low quartiles. This rising inequalities between the high and low quartiles remain until today.

Rising inequalities, on the one hand, might be perceived as a sign of robust economic growth, because some countries have moved forward and launched innovative products. On the other hand, inequalities may bring about detrimental effects on social and economic growth. Those countries who are left behind might find it difficult to struggle and adjust with the high-pace development. Low income households might response and adapt more slowly to the economic shocks. The slow response and adaptation might be due to the low integrating capacity a country has. Deficit importers and inflation phenomena in several African countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, and Malawi are some of macroeconomic instability. No altruism should prevail realizing that 1.4 billion people who live in poverty are all in developing countries. And, when economy goes out of control, crime rate rises higher and health service goes weaker.

Macroeconomic instability which might be resulted from income gap could lead to social instability. The complex conundrum between the two is, however, not clear-cut. Its complexity is, nevertheless, tried to be responded by other sector, which is education, particularly bilingual education. It is a response which does not belong to neither economic nor social sector.

**Bilingual Education Then and Now**

Bilingual Education could be defined as ‘educational programs that are designed to promote bilingual skills among students’ (Cummins and Corson 1997: xii). It is not a new concept. In fact, it has evolved since the beginning of the 20th century. Previous researches, 1920s to 1950s, indicate that bilingualism is detrimental to children’s cognitive development. This belief was strongly approved in London conference in 1931, announcing that bilingualism was a handicap to education. This paradigm shifted when 200,000 students in Mexico were tested to prove that bilingual children did not do any worse than the monolinguals. Since then, bilingual education has been widely implemented for many purposes.
According to Cummins and Corson (1997), by virtue of its purposes, bilingual education can be classified into four, i.e. (1) program which involves the use of indigenous or Native language as medium of instruction, such as Aboriginal languages in Australia, (2) program involving the use of national minority language to promote its official status, like those implemented in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, (3) program which includes international minority languages which are the immigrants’ languages, such as the case of US and Netherland, and (4) program intended to develop bilingual and biliteracy skills among students, like those of Brunei, Canada, Hong Kong and Lebanon. The four bilingual programs are currently implemented. However, cognizant to the problems presented earlier, the pedagogical objectives of bilingual education should be updated with the new context, *vis-à-vis* globalisation.

Globalisation positions English as a global language. Discussion and researches on language so far have been focusing on English as an International Language. Eighty percent of the world’s information in the internet is in English. But then, the use of English only is not sufficient as an integrating tool. Its inadequacy does not lie on its practical level, but more into perceptual level. If the language advocated for bilingual education is only English, then the integration comes from only one side, in this case, developing country; whereas the developed countries stay in their comfort zone. They tend not to learn other languages as other language users learn English. This superior position in language use apparently also contributes in culture superiority. If a certain culture feels superior to others, it might devalue other cultures. To avoid this, there should be two ways of mutual language learning as an attempt to integrate. Bilingual education for those developed countries is Languages Other Than English (LOTE) which is aimed to raise cross-cultural understanding. Bilingual education for developing countries is English as an empowerment to participate in globalisation.

**English as an Empowering Tool**

To re-contextualise Bilingual Education within globalisation framework, the first outlook is focusing on English-national language bilingual program which is promoted for developing countries to accelerate the pace of integration. English is advocated because it is a global language. The global use is indicated by the fact that 80% of the sources in the internet are stored in English. There is no other way to access that knowledge than equipping them with English.

This linear relationship between English proficiency and integrating capacity is in line with Lin and Martin (2005), that some elements required to participate in global competition are English communication skills, information technology, business management, and commercial know-how. The importance of English is approved by the data that English is currently the most widely taught language in over 100 countries (Crystal 1997). As a consequence, only those with access to such knowledge and skills in educational context will be able to benefit from globalisation. Equipped with the global tool, one would gain a
transnational mobility as he has more opportunities in finding jobs anywhere across the globe and on top of that, access to new knowledge and skills. In other words, those who can use English would have a plus point in social, economic, political and cultural terms.

It is English which holds the critical role because it is widely used in many countries. The data in 1996 show that English native speaker in the world is approximately 375 million, those who use English as a second language reach up to 518 million, whereas those who use English as a foreign language reach 750 million (Graddol 1997). These statistics are portrayed by figure 2 below, adopting the three layering system of Kachru (1985 in Lynch 2000).

**Figure 2. English users in the world (combined from Graddol 1997 and Kachru 1985)**

Kachru (1985 in Lynch 2000), in terms of English ownership, has divided English users into three concentric circles. This means that the central zone is occupied by native speakers, the middle layer by those who use English as a second language (the colonies), and those in the third layer is the users of English as a foreign language. Although the central category has the lowest amount, it holds the control. The two outer layer categories might see the central as perfect model. This tiered hierarchy creates inequality in communication across layers. According to Foucault (2002), language and power is tightly related. He argues that those who have command of the dominant language drive the political vehicle and thus have significant power over those less fluent in the language. To him, ‘language is a significant system in the creation and distribution of power’.

This power relation is, somehow, unfair. Those who speak global language as a mother tongue would automatically be in a position of power compared to those who have to learn it as an official or foreign language. As far as the English power concerned, during the twentieth century, the position of English in the world is even maintained and strengthened by American’s economic supremacy. Accordingly, the use of English as a global language is a form of linguistic imperialism by witnessing its inevitable as well as unstoppable expansive reach.
Further scrutinizing this issue, the polemics engaging in every debate about English as a global language is whether this idea may be interpreted as an indication of the ongoing colonisation or simply a pragmatic reason driven by the world economy (Crystal 1997; Lynch 2000; Modiano 2001; Bruthiaux 2002). At least there are three major points to analyse the prominence of English. First, English is clearly a hegemonic language in the contemporary world, due both to the extensive impact of the British Empire during the colonial period (commonly called as English Diaspora). Second, the dominance of the American economy, culture, science, technology, politics, and thus media, has raised English in the contemporary world highlight. Although, the U.S. has recently experienced massive economic downturn, the media, however, still boosts up, for example, Barrack Obama inauguration, Bush policy, etc. Further, Crystal articulates the idea by saying ‘the language behind the US dollar was English’ (1997: 8). Third, English stands out from other languages because, in our increasingly interconnected world, it has become the *lingua franca* of interaction.

The contrast between the polemics and the stance of English as an empowering tool for youths diverges into two polarities: opportunities and threats. Globalisation, then, has given rise to the use of English at the crossroads. And, youths are caught at the crossroads. A sceptical look, by becoming more alert on the threats of English, might hold back youth from joining the global competition. A liberal stance could probably contribute to the erosion of one’s national identity. Framing English in pedagogical context, *vis-à-vis* bilingual education, might serve as a win-win solution. Opportunities offered by globalisation could be taken, and alert towards threats could be conquered.

Bilingual education is implemented in school and other institutional settings. Normally, it realizes in the form of either in International schools, Bilingual schools, or Immersion class which seemingly operate exclusively in some countries. They offer math, science and social studies with English as the medium of instruction. The following table is a comparison of bilingual education practiced in some developing countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Language Education Policy</th>
<th>Colonial history</th>
<th>Position of English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Three Language Formula (mother tongue, national language, English)</td>
<td>British Empire</td>
<td>2nd Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Immersion program (core subjects in English started from Standard 1)</td>
<td>British Empire</td>
<td>2nd Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Immersion program (Math, science, and social studies in English from Year 7) started in 2004</td>
<td>Netherlands, Japan</td>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>alternative immersion (Math)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Foreign</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 presents seven profiles of developing countries in terms of their language education policy, colonial history and the position of English. As indicated in Table 1, different countries have different form of bilingual education. For example, the neighbouring countries like Malaysia and Indonesia have entirely distinctive programs. Malaysia starts the bilingual program from Standard 1, whereas Indonesia begins from Year 7. The different starting point could also be caused by the position of English in both countries. English is considered as a second language in Malaysia. It means that people speak English not only at school or official setting, but also at home and public places. Yet, in Indonesia, English is acknowledged as a foreign language. It is mainly employed in particular domains, such as school and international company. Historically speaking, the position of English in a country can be traced back from its colonial history. As Malaysia was occupied by British Empire (the beginning of 18th century to 1941), English was once becoming the medium of instruction. As compared to Indonesia which was colonized by the Dutch and Japan, then English wave has just emerged in 2004.

To reach the goal of bilingual education in developing countries – to empower youth to join the globalisation – a frame should be built. Many cases show that youth tend to misunderstand the notion of globalisation. It is not how one familiar with the trend in Hollywood or other humdrum of western properties. Youth should not be washed away by those ‘filterless global entertainment’ which could fade away one’s national identity. Going global does not mean leaving local values. Bilingual education should, then, be responsive with this issue. Aiming that goal, in a practical level, science and technology building related subjects could be taught in English, whereas social and national character building related subjects should be taught in national language. This would tie the local and global interconnectedness. Figure 3 maps out this framework.
Figure 3. Framing the model of bilingual education for developing countries

LOTE for Developed Countries as Cross Cultural Understanding Catalyst

As mentioned earlier, a monolithic belief of a language leads to linguistic complacency implying that a monolingual may not be motivated to learn other languages. As language is bound up with culture, this viewpoint affects inter-cultural relations and understanding towards other cultures. Thus, English monolinguals may tend to devalue other languages with a corollary impact on cultural values and identity. This scepticism, however, does not mean that English should be discredited by simply neglecting the fact that it is used for the purpose of wider communication and international movement. Unable to avoid the world-wide use of English, there should be an attempt made to reach the equilibrium point of mutual understanding.

Bilingual education is the alternative response offered. Bilingualism enables youth to operate in more than one cultural framework. It functions as a catalyst to understand that there is more than one of thinking and behaving. If this happens, devaluing and discriminating other cultures could probably be avoided. UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and its action plan (2001) mention that ‘languages are indeed essential to the identity of groups and individuals and to their peaceful coexistence… cultural diversity is closely linked to linguistic diversity’. Language is like the door of a culture. Underlying values, beliefs, and norms of a culture could likely be learnt from its language. Thus, learning languages other than English (LOTE) would contribute to understanding the culture of that particular language.
There is no such guarantee that by learning other languages, racial conflict could completely be avoided. At least, by incorporating cultural learning tour in language learning, understanding other culture is not a utopia. Globalisation has created a more melting pot of diverse cultures. Cognizant to that notion, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica (2003), 48.5% of countries world wide are multicultural with various proportions across continents. Article 2 of Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO 2001: 13) mentions that ‘in our increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together’. Learning other languages here would catalyse understanding other cultures. Understanding is, however, not a business of ability, it is more into attitude or state of mind. It is a proof of acknowledgment and respect towards other languages, thus other cultures.

In policy level, such cross-cultural understanding idea could be realized by LOTE national program. This program could be started by identifying the cultural diversity of the state or territory, then only certain languages could be endorsed. USA has implemented Bilingual Education Act since 1968. The result has been, however, unsatisfactory. An evaluation study of the effects of bilingual education in the US conducted by Lam (1992) reveals that the improvement of bilingual education evaluation has been unsuccessful. He argues that the studies he reviews, some of which are lack of sound and practical guidelines, incompetent program evaluators, and inappropriate state and federal policies. That is why, to exemplify the issuance process of LOTE national program, Australia is taken into account as it has a well-structured LOTE national program. A study on students’ attitude to LOTE by Squires (2003 in Jung et al 2007) reveals that positive attitude is generally found on students and teachers of LOTE. This academic joy is catered by, one of which, the structure of the program. That is why, as a subject of overview, the following table is LOTE policy in three States in Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Terr.</th>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Priority Languages</th>
<th>Other Languages</th>
<th>Levels of schooling &amp; hours of instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Excellence and Equity (1989), LOTE Strategic Plan Consultation Document (1992)</td>
<td>Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Modern Greek, Spanish</td>
<td>Indonesian, Korean, Russian, and Vietnamese as a result of the inclusion of Saturday School of Community Languages.</td>
<td>By 1996, 100 hours for Years 7-10; after that 200 hours Years 11 &amp; 12; 25% of Year 12 students to be studying a LOTE by 2000. By 2010, all K-12 students to be studying a LOTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qld</td>
<td>P-10 Language Education</td>
<td>Chinese, French</td>
<td>Arabic, Ausian, Korean, Krioi</td>
<td>By January 1996 at least one language in each school for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 displays language policy in three states in Australia (New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria), as well as its implementation in school setting. The table presents the document of the policy, priority languages empowered, other languages suggested, and its implementation at school level (school levelling and hours of instruction). It is shown that different State or Territory endorses different policy. The languages are not selected randomly, rather purposefully. The purpose is driven by who lives in certain state or territory and how many. For example, in Victoria, in terms of linguistic diversity, there are at least 122 languages (including English) spoken by the residents. In terms of demography, approximately 42% of Melbourne residents were born overseas. This high cultural as well as linguistic diversity urges language policy to be endorsed. Compulsory LOTE is issued in Year 7 in 1992, and in Year 8 in 1993. Each school offers different LOTE, such as Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Modern Greek, and Vietnamese. These languages are selected purposefully from the community demographic profile and linguistic diversity data. Table 3 explains the linguistic diversity in Victoria.

**Table 3. Language spoken at home in Victoria (ABS, 2006)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>39,687</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>5,851</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>4,306</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>2,237</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>1,111</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>1,022</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3, taken from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006), shows the statistics of languages spoken at home by Victoria residents. It is revealed that the languages advocated at school for LOTE program are the selected languages spoken by the majority of the residents. In the table, the languages endorsed in the policy are yellow highlighted.

In a more practical level, cultural awareness could be inserted from the curriculum design to teaching and learning process of LOTE. In curriculum level, designers could allocate some slots for cultural understanding. In material development, cross-cultural comparison could be inserted in culture focus. In teaching and learning process, students might be given more space to explore other cultures.

The advantages of endorsing such policy, in the long run, does not contribute only to the increased cognitive skills and better academic achievement, but also improve understanding towards other culture. This socio-political attempt of integration through language learning would benefit a country’s unity, especially those multicultural ones, such as US and Australia. The minority groups would feel acknowledged by their existence, despite their small numbers. Furthermore, now the corporate world begins to realize that linguistic capabilities are significant to help conduct business negotiations in the global economy. It would be a hands-on tool to sell products or service abroad, as knowledge of the language and understanding of the culture of the client are already built-in (Abbott and Brown 2006). From the students’ point of view, research conducted by Parkes (2008) in South-West USA, reveals the main reasons of why bilingual education is necessary. Of all respondents, 93.6% said that they want to be able to speak, read and write in two languages,
63.1% succeed in global society, 61.3% to be more successful in school, and to be comfortable to different people (60.7%). This shows that youth in the research coverage are aware that bilingual education is necessary, as they take the program not only for pedagogical reason, but also for economic and social-political reasons going out of the boundaries of classroom walls.

Realizing the benefits, it is reasonable to propose LOTE program within bilingual education framework in developed countries. First, from inward perspective, developed countries are migration destinations which become the melting pot of many different countries. LOTE program would help secure the internal social security and unity of a multicultural country. Cross-cultural misunderstanding and interracial conflicts could be possibly mitigated. In other words, the more multicultural and multilingual a country is, the more urgency a LOTE program. Second, from an outward outlook, a developed country is in a superior position from developing countries whose income level is higher (chart 1). At least, learning other languages could lessen the country's potential to proliferate monolingualism by economic power. As to some, globalisation is perceived as imperialism by superior countries.

Conclusion

All in all, bilingual education set for both developed and developing countries is a win-win solution to live in harmony. For developing countries, English functions as a medium of instruction for math, science and technology subject-related. These content-based English programs would equip youth to be more competitive in the global competition. Moral and social-related courses should maintain the use of national language or mother tongue. This is aimed to make them aware of their national identity, by not excessively overwhelmed with International matter, which could lead to identity loss. Bilingual education for developed countries, should consider languages other than English with a cultural awareness program to catalyse cross-cultural understanding. This would benefit them pedagogically, socio-politically, and economically.

In modelling the framework of bilingual education, this paper provides a relatively general blueprint adopted from countries which have implemented the program as national, state or federal policy, such as US, Australia Indonesia and Malaysia. That is why, further mechanism of bilingual education implementation in each country or even state or territory should be contextualized by undertaking needs analysis regarding who live within the region, what kind of language policy endorsed in that particular region, and what to achieve by running bilingual education programs.
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