

**How to raise a child in a Bilingual Community: in Hawaii**

**By**

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### **Introduction**

Bilingualism is the ability to use two or more languages effectively and appropriately for personal, educational, social or work relate purposes. In today upbringing half the world is bilingual (Grosjean, 2005). In today's society parents want their children to be bilingual because it will help them get better careers in other countries and also in the United States. Hawai'i is a state that have a lot of bilingual communities on the island. Some people will argue that being a parent or a child living in a bilingual community is an invaluable merit. Let us dwell to some extent on the merits. To begin with, the unquestionable advantage children would experience is the exposure to double language environment. If the learning process is not impacted by any negative factors, the language acquisition comes naturally. I'm bilingual and I first speak learn to Korean when I was young and then learn how to speak English after. I believe that in the future when I raise my child. I want my child to be able to speak two or three languages and it depends on the communities we lived in. There are key issues that still raise questions with raising a child in a bilingual home and community. One of the issues I want to address is "why some children raised in a bilingual setting speak two languages and others do not" (Houwer, 2000)? The other issue is the parent's involvement with their child in speaking two languages or more. The factors that minority language can be kept speaking at home and not lose to the majority language like English in Hawai'i. The negative factors I want to address also is why some children can't speak their primary or minority language does it depends on the family background or when they arrived at a certain age. I be doing two research studies by researching

using the articles I found and my own studies by doing interviews with five different people who doesn't know each other.

### **Social factors in raising a child in Bilingual community in Hawaii**

I know the first language the child will learn is the parent's native language because it starts when the parent's talks to the child when they are born and be raised from their culture beliefs. The child will able to hear sound from his or her parents. One factor indicates that parents' beliefs, attitudes, and interactions with their children are important in helping children become bilingual (De Houwer, 1999). "Parents who came from different language backgrounds often hope that their children will be able to speak the languages of both their parents" (Takuchi, M. 2006). Hawai'i have a lot of married couples who speak different languages than their spouses. Some parent's in the United States thinks that a child learning two languages at the same time will have language confusion. But some publications said that's not true, I think the children learn the language when they are young they will be able to master their second language. One author (Houwer, 2000) "one parent-one language strategy did not provide a necessary nor sufficient input condition. Implications for bilingual families are discussed". As most children eventually become English dominant or even monolingual in English (Wong Fillmore, 2000). This is due at least in part to the high status of English and the limited number of opportunities. There are a lot of positive factors for children to become bilingual especially in Hawai'i and there some that lose their primary language and use the language that is mostly use in their community.

### **Article Research Studies**

In Pearson (2007) article one research study shows that "when families are proactive and provide daily activities for children in the minority language, the children respond by learning it.

In addition, dual-immersion, “two-way” schooling is shown to benefit children’s level of language proficiency in the minority language without diminishing their progress”. In Houwer (2000) research the article explains that the purpose of the study to see if children “will be active bilingual in the first place”. The study they use on children is by measuring setting, data collection, questionnaire, yield, and data subset from immigrant families who came to the United States. In the (Lesmen, Mayo, & Scheele) “home language environment of monolingual and bilingual children and their language proficiency” article they were studying the relationship between learning from home the language and vocabulary. They use the study on Moroccan-Dutch & Turkish- Dutch immigrants.

### **Article Research Results**

The results that “Lesmen, Mayo, & Scheele”:

“The differences in the patterns of language input found between the three groups largely explained the differences in children’s L1 proficiency, and, in the Moroccan–Dutch and Turkish–Dutch group, the differences in children’s L2 vocabulary. Furthermore, the differences in input patterns were clearly related to background characteristics, including the status of the minority languages involved. In view of optimal preparation for primary school, being raised in a low-SES bilingual immigrant family puts young children’s language development at a double risk: first, the (limited) available time for literate and oral language interactions has to be divided over two languages,

which have to compete for scarce resources; second, the lack of association of SES with L1 input limits the support of L1 for acquiring L2.”(2010)

The results show that Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan- Dutch had equal cognitive skills. But the Moroccan had better vocabulary than the Turkish. They also found that both had positive transfer L1 to L2 input and language transfer. This results is similar to the article Pearson wrote that the “five factors discussed are input, language status, access to literacy, family language use, and community support, including schooling” (2007) can make a child bilingual by this support. Also being in an immersion school that the children can speak both English and Spanish. In Houwer(2007) article also explained that:

“Raising children to speak two languages only has a 75% success rate. Parents often find it a difficult process that requires a lot of hard work (Okita, 2002). Other parents seemingly pay no special attention to their children’s language learning and have actively bilingual children, apparently without much effort” (2007).

The article findings have shown that 75% of children eventually become bilingual and 25% will lose their minority language and only speak the majority language in the community. The 25% of children will have subtractive bilingualism and that is common in the United States because they children lost their minority language when they were growing up and now only speak English.

## **Participants**

In 2013 I conducted research work with five participants to see what kind of factors will affect the child as they live in a bilingual communities in Hawai‘i. The first two participants are from Japan and both have come to Honolulu to work. Both have been in Hawai‘i for three years

now. The next group of participants are from Korean descent and both were born in O‘ahu and been raised here all their life. The last Participant is from South Korea and he been living here in Hawai‘i for two and a half years.

**Table 1: Overview of the participants**

Name	Year of Birth	First visit to Honolulu	Visa Status	Languages	Education	Occupation
Pakito	1982	1990	None	Japanese English	Military and MIT	Computer programmer at Hickam
Ayako	1980	2010	Immigrant	Japanese English	USC	Japanese Wedding planner
Stasha	1991	1991	N/A	English Korean	University of Hawaii	Student
Ken	1993	1993	N/A	English Korean	University of Hawaii	Student/salesman at Harley Davidson
Mark	1986	2011	Immigrant	Korean English	Seoul University, University of Hawaii	Student/DJ

At the time of the interview Pakito was 31 years old have been in Honolulu at three years now. He used to live in Hawai'i for sixteen years. Since he was in the military, they ship him to Japan in 2005. While he was station in Tokyo, he married a Japanese woman and brought her back to Honolulu in 2011. Because the Air Force stations him back in Hawaii. They have a daughter who is three years of age. He can speak both Japanese and English Fluent. He is right now working as computer programmer at Hickam Air Force base. He also is taking classes online at University of Hawai'i West O'ahu.

Ayako was 33 years old in 2013 and lived in Hawai'i for about three years now. She had improve her English while living in Hawai'i. She is working in a Japanese Wedding Company based in Honolulu. All her clients are Japanese tourists who want to get married in Oahu. The sites the Japanese tourist wants to get married at are nice beaches and Ko olina hotel because the that is one of the highest class Hotel in Hawai'i. She is very independent, an even her friends are bilingual they both can speak English and Japanese pretty well. Also she is a single parent with a four year old daughter.

Stasha was 22 years old and was born in Hawai'i and her parents our first generation Koreans who came from South Korea and been living in Salt Lake for about twenty one years. She went to public school all her life in Hawai'i. She says she can speak Korean pretty well because that is what her parents speak to her at home. Right now she is attending at the University of Mānoa. She will graduate with a degree in Second Language Studies Bachelor degree in spring 2015. Her plan will be teaching English in Korea or Japan.

Ken was 20 years old in 2013 and has been living in Hawaii all his life. Like Stasha he is Korean and use to speak Korean really well when he was younger. He also went to public school all his life growing up. His parents are also first generation Korean and been living in

downtown for twenty years now. He been going to the University of Hawai'i for about two years. Next semester he will study abroad at South Korea. He will be attending Seoul national University. He also is working at Harley Davidson at Waikiki as a salesman.

Mark was 27 years old in 2013 and lived in Hawai'i about two years. He is from South Korea. He moved to Hawai'i to better himself in speaking English. Right now he is attending University of Hawai'i and will be graduating next spring semester with a bachelor degree in Second Language studies. Right now he been better in speaking English because of his new friends he made while joining a club call ISA (International Students Association). He has some difficulty speaking certain words in English.

### **Research Questions**

By using three different set of questions to every groups and I want to see their reactions and see if they want be bilingual or want their child to be bilingual.

#### **Group 1**

1. Do you want your child to be Bilingual?
2. What language do you speak to your kids at home?

#### **Group 2**

1. Where you able to speak your minority Language fluently when you were younger?
2. Do you consider yourself Bilingual?

#### **Group 3**

1. Do want to be a native English speaker one day?
2. When you have kids do you want your children to be bilingual?



## Data Collection

I will be collecting my research by a data base study. I will do it by interview my five participants. I will compare the data to the article data to find the results. I divide all the participants in three groups. I will be interviewing the two Japanese participants by asking them certain questions. The second group will be the two Korean students who lived in Hawai'i all their lives and ask them some questions about bilingual. The last participant is the native Korean speaker who came to Hawai'i to better his English speaking. I will give him a different set of questions. I will see what all the participants' views are and their opinions.

## Results

Based on the answers from group one. Both participants said they want their child to be bilingual. Both said they both teach their kids Japanese first because that is their native language in the first place.

As Pikito said,

“I want my daughter to be bilingual eventually. I will be teaching her English and her Mother will be teaching her Japanese. In Hawai'i you need to be Bilingual to get good paying job because Hawaii is a bilingual industry”.

During my interview with group 2 participants. I had very interesting answers from them. One can speak Korean almost fluently because of her parents. She speak only Korean at home and no English.

Juno: 당신은 한국어를 말할 수

Stasha: 그래, 난 꽤 잘 한국어를 말할 수있는

Juno: Can you speak Korean Fluent

Stasha: Yes, I can speak Korean pretty well

Juno: 당신은 자신이 이중 언어 생각하십니까

Stasha: 예, 나는 이중 언어라고 생각

Juno: Do you consider yourself bilingual

Stasha: Yes, I consider myself bilingual

My next interview with Ken:

Juno: 당신은 한국어 유창하게 말을 할 수

Ken: 나는 단지 그것을 조금 말할 수 있습니다

Juno: Can speak Korean fluently?

Ken: I can only speak a little

Juno: How come you can't speak Korean well?

Ken: My parents want me learn to speak English well.

My last interview went pretty well as Mark told me he want his child to be bilingual or multilingual because that is the Korean culture nowadays as they can speak three or four languages.

## **Conclusion**

The positive factors when raising a bilingual child are the parents, grandparents, and school. If the parents care about their child speaking bilingual and they must speak there minority language at home and the majority language at school. By my research from the

articles and by data based research through interviews. The results were almost identical. The research from articles said 75% of children who learn to speak two languages with the help of the parents. They eventually will be bilingual. Only 25% will become monolingual and lose their minority language. Through my data based research I found 80% are bilingual and 20% Monolingual. It all depends on the parents the community they lived in also. The negative factors are the parents do not care if their kids are bilingual or not. The other factor is the motivation of still speaking their minority language. I still think in Hawai'i there are lot of Bilingual communities compare to the mainland.

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## **Reflection**

I learn a lot by doing this research. I had to look for resources articles online and in the libraries for textbooks for my topic about raising a bilingual child. I found seven online resources for my research paper. I also had to interview 5 people and they were very busy and I had to meet them at various times. I was asking couple questions to the participants from Japan. I was asking how long did they live in Hawai'i and did you teach your kid how to speak English in Japan or when you guys arrived in Hawai'i. Both told me the mother speaks to their kid in Japanese and they learn English from their father and television. The other 2 participants were Korean descent and both was born in Hawai'i all their life. One can only speak Korean a little, but understand Korean well. The other can speak Korea n a little better than participant 1 because their parents want their kid to be bilingual.

The hard time I was finding was the resources to find articles online, periodicals and newspaper ads. I had to ask my classmates for help like Matt and Grace. They gave some resources to use my research paper. The feedback was good to help me about the mistakes I had mad in my rough draft and final paper draft. This research taught me a lot how to do interviews about people who can speak more than one language and do data research on them.

