

Mandarin Chinese Immersion Program for Preschool Children in an Urban Private
School in California: A Case Study

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Abstract

This study enlisted language immersion practitioners in highlighting and exploring the issues and challenges that accompany language immersion education. Comprehensive focused personal interviews of preschool Mandarin Chinese language immersion educators in a private school provided the basis of the study.

The research literature reviewed indicated that when young children learn a new language it benefits them later in their education. These students have increased competency in their second language compared to children who do not received language instruction in early childhood.

Four professionals who are bilingual in English and Mandarin, and one expert in immersion program were interviewed; all four participants worked in a Chinese Mandarin private preschool in the San Francisco area.

Following an analysis of responses, the professionals outlined different instructional strategies and various challenges that characterize language immersion education. The study also provides a coherent comparison of this analysis with previous research works in adding value to language immersion schooling.

Chapter 1 Introduction

The interest I exhibit with respect to the program of bilingual education has its roots from the period when I undertook a volunteer practice in a Mandarin Chinese immersion program involving preschoolers. When the transitional period arrives, children aged 3 years are required to recite Chinese poems under the guidance of a teacher who uses mandarin. This acted as an impetus for me to get further insights on how the immersion program impact on English speaking students and minority language-speaking students.

The enhancement of my interest regarding this subject also stems from reading an article that described the correlation that exists between bilingualism and brain development. From that period, I have built interest in exploring the California bilingual program. While I am familiar with certain theoretical knowledge concerning the structures of the bilingual program, I was driven to assess the various perspectives and opinions of teachers on the bilingual program. Few opportunities exist for parents for enrolling their children in a Mandarin Chinese immersion program while they are still at a young age.

Research Questions

Research questions including the following:

What do preschool Chinese immersion language program look like?

What are professionals' perceptions of the effectiveness of preschool language programs in teaching mandarin to young preschoolers?

Background and Need

Definition of immersion Programs

Generally speaking, at least 50 percent of instruction during a given academic year must be provided through the second language for the program to be regarded as immersion. Programs in which one subject and the language arts are taught through the second language are generally identified as enriched second language programs.

(Genesee, 1987, p.1)

Put simply, immersion language program basically refers to use the specific foreign language to teach regular school curriculum. That is to say, the target foreign language is the medium of content instruction. The aim of such program is to not only help students to acquire a second language but also prepare students to function in the second language meanwhile develop a sense of cross culture understanding.

In United States, there are three main types of immersion program are list in the following:

Total Immersion Program

Partial Immersion Program

Two Way Bilingual Program

Total Immersion Program

This model is originally start in 1965 in Canada and has spread around the world. In the Total Immersion Program, starts at the beginning of the year, students experience a full immersion of a target language throughout the time at school. English is only used when the specific terms need to be clarified. The purpose of total immersion program is that by the end of the school year students are able to communicate and be fluent in this target language (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011).

Partial Immersion Program

In the Partial Immersion Program, the time used by the target language depends on the emphasis of program itself, normally nearly half of the time a foreigner language is used (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011).

Two Way Bilingual Immersion Programs

In United States, the Two Way Bilingual Immersion Program is considered as the most popular immersion program in the country. The two way bilingual immersion also known as TWBI programs integrate both the English learners, language minority students, together with the English speakers or majority students, in order to build their biliteracy as well as bilingualism with other languages. The two-way bilingual immersion programs

enhance biliteracy and bilingualism, desirable cross-cultural attitudes, behaviors in all students and grade level academic achievements.

A critical deliberation when developing programs of TWBI program entails the selection of the model of the program. As regards California, two models of programs are predominant. The first model is the 90/10 where characteristically the non-English language takes up 90% as the mode of instruction at the level of kindergarten while English language receives the remaining 10%. The non-English language of communication gradually undergoes an annual reduction in usage up to the point where equilibrium occurs between the target language and English. This model embodies about 111 programs.

The second model comprise of the 50/50 structure, which implies that both the target language and English are used in 50% basis. In the two models, delivery of instruction encompasses both languages albeit by using one language at a given instance. Two-way bilingual immersion programs integrate bilingual education maintenance with an external language immersion model. This lasts at minimum between 5 and 7 years. The key two-way bilingual immersion programs take different forms, namely charter school, alternative education program and parental waiver. Most funding directed towards TWBI involves the U.S department of Education who invoke the No Child Left Behind Act, Title III (Medina, 2003).

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the major theoretical foundations of bilingual education. The research literature was gathered from academic databases. Information was organized into the areas that included historical context and review of previous research

Historical Context

Historically, the first language immersion program was conducted in Canada in 1965. The aim is to not only offer an opportunity for the non French speaking students to acquire French language, but also help to promote a cross cultural communication between English and French (Safty, 1991). In America, the program began in the 1960s after the country experienced an influx of refugees from Cuba. Private schools were established to cater to Cuban refugees and soon, English speaking students were enrolled for lessons on the Cuban language. However, its history in California dates back to the 1980s with public schools being established in areas such as San Francisco and Oakland. Statistically, the State of California has the highest numbers of programs compared to any other single state (Gershberg, Danenberg, & Sánchez, 2004). Its programs offer more than five languages with Chinese being one of them.

Review of the Previous Literature

Bilingual immersion programs are becoming increasingly popular in many countries. Their effects are crucial in the learning of other languages other than the native ones. According to Soderman (2010), it is especially efficient when introduced to learners at an early age for instance preschool. This way, it becomes easy to grow up with solid oral skills before being introduced to reading and writing. The present study is based on how the immersion program works in California where preschoolers are engaged in a Mandarin Chinese immersion program. The program gives the children an opportunity to learn Mandarin Chinese. It is not restricted to Chinese and English speaking students but also to those speaking other minority languages but who are schooled in the United States.

The immersion program is introduced during the preschool stage for many reasons. Before they start to put down on paper the languages they have learned, preschoolers are mainly occupied by playful learning activities, a factor that makes the learning a new language simple. Immersion programs prepare them for future practice of the acquired languages (Potowski, 2007). Studies have also indicated that early immersion programs are essential for brain development. By being introduced to two different languages at the same time and with high levels of instruction, children become absorbed in trying to differentiate the varying aspects of the languages. Their brains are therefore performing many tasks, though not without challenges. The brain development

of such children is higher or significantly faster than that of monolingual children in preschool.

Various people have moved to challenge this notion that early exposure to a new language is better than later. According to them (Ekstrand, 1979; Hill, 1970; Skutnabb-Kangas 1981 as cited in Safty, 1991), the early stages of a person's life are very sensitive. Moreover, overburdening a child with numerous tasks is precarious to their development. Researchers cited that there is no evidence suggesting poor second language learning abilities with advancement in age (Liu, 2009). This is not to mean that learning language an early age is disastrous either. Scientifically, brain development is nurtured, which is why emphasis on learning second languages is placed at an early age.

Older children may have difficulty mastering a new language due to having passed the stage where they are most agile in language development. The same learning instructions given to children cannot be given to older persons, for instance, those given in the form of playful songs or children's activities. It is important to note that children involved in early immersion programs have more proficiency in learning other languages in the future.

In a study by Senesac (2002), an assertion of the effects of age on acquisition of new language was made. Based in production of sentences and consonant and vowel formation, Senesac confirms that late learners have an accent that influences their production of sentences. In addition, the formations of consonant and vowel sounds,

which form part of prosody, are developed in the early stages of first language acquisition. The importance of prosody in language has been backed by several research findings. All these point to the fact that efforts to learn two languages at the same time and an early age pay off more than at a later stage. It is possible to learn a new language later in life but without the same level of proficiency seen among learners at an early stage (Medina, 2003).

The role the teacher plays in the early immersion language program is crucial to actually mastering the language. Most times instructors with a high level of mastery of both the native and the acquired languages are used. The teacher's voice in immersion programs is essential because through it instructions are passed. In preschool immersion program, the teacher's voice is rarely heard. This is because their focus is on other materials and tools that help these young students to learn language skills. Such tools include gestures, visual displays among other interactive forums (Tedick, Christian & Fortune, 2011). These interactive sessions are significant in promoting cultural integration among the participating cultures. In this case, there is interaction between the American and Chinese cultures. These sessions form part of the instructional strategies that teachers use (Jacobson, 2004).

The above findings by Jacobson (2004) were in part revealed in an interview with an instructor at the school which offering immersion language program. The interview was insightful in providing relevant information on the success of this program. Its

effectiveness according to the teacher has contributed immensely to its growing popularity among students and parents eager to place their children in such programs. It offers a platform for acquisition of foreign languages in an efficient manner together with a host of other benefits that it presents such as cultural diversity.

Soderman (2012) is of the point of view that, immersion programs require that the teachers, students, parents, and administrators put into consideration bilingualism as a strong attribute instead of cognitive and linguistic liability. Based on that, bilingual participants were involved in the study. Huang and Jun (2009) noted that, age is an important factor to consider when studying language acquisition by bilinguals.

Statistical Information

According to Morning News, there is a growing trend that “the number of students taking Mandarin in public school in grades seven through twelve grew from 20,000 in 2004-05 to 60,000 three years later (Murray, 2012). The expansion of the Chinese-American community is considered as one of the major factors in explaining why there is a growing trend of students who enroll in the immersion program., “the Asian population is expected to grow 213%, from 11.9 million in 2004 to 34.4 million in 2050.” (US Census Bureau 2004, p.82 cited in Tedick, Christian & Fortune, 2011)

According to key findings, "... based on comparing 2004-05 enrollment with 2007-08, the number of students who study Mandarin Chinese has grown 195 percent to 60,000 (Robelen, 2011).

Interview with an Expert

The expert responded to the following questions in regard to bilingual immersion program in preschool. Some of the questions that the expert offers response to include:

1. What's your definition of an ideal immersion program?
2. What instructional strategies and activities are critical to a preschool immersion model?
3. What are the main goals for the immersion program? What strategies do you use to achieve these goals?
4. What are the biggest challenges you and your teachers encountered so far?
5. How do the students really benefit from such program?

On 15th January 2013 I interviewed Dr. AO, the principal of PK school. Dr. AO is an expert in immersion program. He has over 30 years in education field with 10 years experiences in international bilingual schools.

Below is the summary of the interview:

What is your definition of an ideal immersion program?

Dr. AO believes that cultural components, the link between language and culture is an essential factor that contributes to an ideal immersion program. An ideal immersion program are all done by culture and not just followed by the textbook or learning vocabulary sheet. And a part of culture should be much deeper and not just holiday, songs or music.

At PK school, the goal is for students to learn about whom Chinese people are and how they think and what they believe. In order to achieve this goal, he claims that there will be a trip in Grade 5 for students to go to China to live with the Chinese family for probably one month. Before they go, they would research something they are interested in, such as facts or education, family roles and responsibilities what does father do, mothers and children. After finishing the research, students then write about their parts of trip in China. They would also interview many people while they are in China.

The students would also take photos to find out specifics about the culture: how the people live in China; what do they value; what's important to them; and what they strive for in the life. Then students could understand each other.

Dr. AO emphasized that is important for students to learn about many aspects of Chinese history, culture, and people.

What instructional strategies and activities are essential to a preschool immersion model?

Dr. AO asserts in preschool, a major instructional strategy is to give students that little window something they're good at it and they're not afraid to try, find a little place they can successes. And also have to be more challenging too so its confidence with challenging. And he also mentioned using techniques as a good way to teach students reading and writing, for example, by using iPad in the classroom.

On the other hand, he concerned that is no huge books for foreigners to study Chinese. He claims although China is starting producing a lot of eBooks, stories but not non-fictions like water or about art for children. He told teacher to write them or find them in English and then translate them into Chinese. Put the characters right over and to do themselves. He said he would start to produce non-fiction and fiction books for kids to learn Chinese with good questions and characters when he retires in several years.

For preschoolers, it is important to use a lot of illustrations, along with picture of what teachers said, and get repeat things teachers are going to encourage students to use languages. Moreover self-talk and narrating what teachers are doing will definitely encourage students willing to speak. Here is an example he provided, students say it in English and then teachers say it in Chinese and get them to repeat.

What are the main goals for the immersion program?

One of the big goals is to prepare bilinguals by grade 5 very fluent in Mandarin Chinese. The measurement of success is when the students go on a trip when grade 5 to China and people see how they can really function. They can function in the school, and they go to the market bargaining with the people, talking on the street, asking for directions so they can function in Chinese. Beside, students learn an appreciation of the language and Chinese culture, history and point of view to make them confident, another important goal. Therefore, immersion programs are not just about immersion. Along with the strong foundation in language, children develop a strong ability to think, to solve problems, to be confident, to be a caring person, and to be open-minded person. Dr. AO thinks that when the school gives out a diploma that means that they are sending a good person into the world or adding personal good to the world. If we just send out the smart person, we have not succeeded in Dr. AO's view. Personal development, not just academic development leads up to later development, to the extent preschool children are fluent in a language. He thinks they develop a good understanding of language, they develop some speaking skills and they develop the ability to write a few characters. Right now, he informed the preschool teachers that they need conduct an assessment at the beginning of the year to know what the children learn over time, through interviewing children. For example, the teacher directs the child as follows: show me where is the cup or tell me 3 colors on the book so if they could say 3 colors out of 5, then they are considered has the ability to the color reorganization.

What strategies do you use to achieve those goals?

To achieve the goals to developing a whole person and a thinking person Dr. AO thinks everyday has to be about everything in their lives. Teachers do not set up a list of rules when the students come in. For example, you can't do this, that, and that, etc. Students work within the classroom and become a community. Teachers develop classroom procedures with the students, things that all students agree to follow. For example, some procedures include not being unkind to each other, sharing with each other, taking turns to speak, to practice giving children sense of ownership and responsibility at a young age. A lot of life is about the choices children make. They own their lives, they own their behaviors, they have to develop strength of character, strong personality and understand they make choices on their own. That's a fundamental practice that teachers do everyday.

What are the biggest challenges you and your teachers encountered so far?

For kindergarten, the challenge is to find a balance of where they are come from. Dr. AO mentioned that they've got students from a Chinese background. They also have new students that come to schools with no Chinese language background. Also for Chinese teachers, they are sometimes talking very fast. They have to stop and to see whether the students are following them. Teachers need to be careful not to train too much because it is not an effective way. Also it is challenge to get the students to use Chinese constantly. Students need to know the expectations and stick to them. Teachers have to constantly remind students of the rules. Repetition becomes second nature. Students do not know

that when they come to school we teach them how to live with other human beings. Now they are living in a society so that is a challenging. Another challenging situation in immersion programs include that non-Chinese speaking parents get really nervous that their children are manipulating them. He gave me an example. Children go back home and tell their parents, “The work is so hard I don’t know what to do” “My teacher is mean to me.” Parents complain to the teacher, so now teachers are making a YouTube video and posting it. Children go home and if parents have any questions, they look at the video. Also the principal hires graduated students to answer parents’ questions posted to a website. Parents may call a hotline as well as get video support. It is hard for parents who want to help their children but do not know how to help them. Parents love to help their children be successful. Our teachers told parents to ask their children to tell them in English. This helps the immersion kids to grow up with independent abilities and strengths.

How do the students really benefit from such program?

They are ready to be citizens of the world and they aware of the other cultures. They will travel in fifth grade and for middle school they might go for several months. Dr. AO also mentioned creating a summer program to send students to another country. Even for high school and college students who spend their first time in another country they would learn much by immersion in another cultures. The real benefit in immersion is that students are not just learning language, they are acquiring language.

Chapter 3 Method

Introduction

This study follows a non-experimental design approach. In this study, four participants were interviewed on their perceptions of children in their classroom and the use of Chinese immersion program in a multicultural classroom. The interview sessions were recorded digitally and were transcribed. Qualitative data were gathered from interviews.

Sample and Site

The case study took place in a private preschool in California where an interview was completed with four classroom teachers who were selected to participate in the study. The selected population for the study focused on bilingual teachers.

Ethical Standards

This paper adheres to ethical standards in the treatment of human subjects in research as articulated by the American Psychological Association (2010). Additionally, the research proposal was reviewed by the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), approved, and assigned number 10067.

Access and Permissions

The access to the preschool, a friend to the researcher was contacted at the school. The individual originated from Taiwan and had worked as a bilingual teacher in the school for about five years. Recommendation about the school offering sufficient information about bilingual education was given. To access the school, was done by contacting the school principal who in turn granted permission for the school to be used.

Data Gathering Strategies

In order to gather the data for this study, the researcher interviewed the four participants in the study to find the responses to the questions outlined in the study. All participants completed interviews either during their break time and lunch break. All responses were confidentially preserved. The questions included:

1. What is your experience in teaching Chinese immersion?
2. What instructional strategies do teachers use to teach native English speaker and English language learner in a Chinese immersion program?
3. How do you deal with students who constantly speak English in your class?
4. How do the students really benefit from such program?
5. How do parents help your students if they don't speak Chinese?
6. What will be the most challenge for you as a bilingual teacher?
7. What are students' academic achievements in such immersion program?
8. What do you do to professionally develop yourself in learning more about

strategies in Chinese immersion program?

9. What are your Chinese language skills?

Data Analysis Approach

Interview notes were read by the researcher several times and coded according to themes.

The results provide themes of the organized data and analyzed further to check on different types of data about the study for example: recurring phrases to identify issues of significance in regard to teachers' perceptions towards immersion program. This helps to identify the personal and cultural impacts on their interaction with the children using Chinese Mandarin immersion program.

Chapter 4 Findings

Description of Site, Individuals, Data

PK School is a first Reggio Emilia inspired based private school that offer a Chinese Mandarin full immersion program in San Francisco area. It starts with preschool and within several years it will expand to elementary grades from K – Grade 8. Four teachers selected in this study including 2 Taiwanese female preschool teachers 1 China mainland female kindergarten teacher and 1 male native American kindergarten teacher to represented a different ethnic groups in PK. All these teachers hold a master’s degree and are fluently in both English and Mandarin Chinese. Three teachers indicated that they have 3-5 year teaching experiences in various school settings prior to come to United State. One teacher had 6 years teaching experiences for Grade 1 and 2 and indicated this is his first year in teaching kindergarten grade.

An interview was designed to address teachers’ perspectives on Chinese Mandarin immersion program in PK school. Interviews were completed anonymously during break time. And these questions included:

1. What is your experience in teaching Chinese immersion?
2. What is your Chinese language skill?
3. What instructional strategies do you use to teach native English speaker and English language learner in such immersion program?

4. How do you deal with students who constantly speak English in the classroom?
5. How do the students really benefit from such program?
6. How do you see your role with parents? How can they help your students if they don't speak Chinese Mandarin at all?
7. What will be the most challenges for you as a bilingualism teacher?
8. What are student's academic achievements in such immersion program?
9. What do you do to professionally develop yourself in learning more about strategies in Chinese immersion program?

Overall Findings, Themes

With respect to what instructional strategies teachers use to teach native English speaker in such program, all teachers responded that they applied an inquiry based learning classroom, which encourages students to ask questions. Teachers mentioned that one useful strategy regarding having students who constantly speak English in the class is through creating a safe and rich learning environment. This help students feel safe and willing to explore and learn in Chinese Mandarin rather than forcing them to learn while they are not yet reaching certain stages. Besides, using “ask&answer” strategy is also a good way to help students to practice speaking Mandarin as much as possible in the classroom. The other strategy includes teachers helping student finish the certain

sentence, asking students to confirm if that is correct or not or to get students to repeat the words or sentences after the teacher pronounces them.

How do the students really benefit from such program?

If students start this program very young and all their teachers are native Chinese speakers, the children develop Mandarin without an American accent. The children are able to think on an automatic level, without translating from one language to another.

How do you see your role with parents? How can they help your students if they don't speak Chinese?

Teachers state they do not have particular concerns regarding parents who do not speak any Chinese at home at all. They believe 8 hours immersion in a full Chinese Mandarin classroom will provide students with enough opportunities to practice what they have learned in the school with peers and teachers. Also a weekly newsletter, Chinese and English version is sent to home to inform parents what students have learned at school. All songs story or vocabulary or phrase are translated in English for parents to understand. Besides, parents are always encouraged to ask questions and express their concerns.

What will be the most challenges for you as a bilingualism teacher?

One concern from a preschool teacher is that not all the students in her classroom have the experience to go to a preschool prior to the time they come to her classroom. Some of them might even do not know what a teacher is, and how they should treat a teacher correctly. Whereas the other Taiwanese teacher had a particular concern regarding

parents' involvement in the classroom, since most of the parents they do not speak Chinese at all. Parents cannot volunteer to work in the classroom.

Most of the western parents, do not have high expectations compared to Asian parents, so it is difficult to find a balance of expectations between Caucasian parents and Asian parents. For western parents their expectations for their children in learning Mandarin Chinese are much lower than for Asian parents. Western parents are happy if their children can sing some Chinese songs whereas Asian parents want their children to read and write at a certain level.

There is a conflict between the Reggio Emilia program and the Mandarin Chinese Immersion program. Teachers are concerned with how to find a balance between full Mandarin immersion program and Reggio Emilia approach. Reggio Emilia focused on discussion and inquiry-based discussion. Whereas for the Mandarin Immersion Program the focus is on vocabulary learning. If students do not have enough vocabulary in Mandarin how can they participate in conversations? Also three teachers consider themselves as foreigners, from Taiwan and Mainland China. It is difficult for them to organize field trips for students since they are not familiar with the San Francisco area. What are students' academic achievements in such immersion program?

Students had a test when they entered Chinese immersion program in elementary school. The test results indicate nearly half of students are assessed as either "native speaker" or fluently in Mandarin.

What do you do to professionally develop yourself in learning more about strategies in Chinese immersion?

For all the teachers, communication with coworkers is considered a useful way for professional development. The other ways also including learning from website or books related to Reggio Emilia teaching methods. For the preschool teacher, they have opportunities to visit other Reggio Emilia based school, and share and exchange ideas with other teachers. Recently, preschool teachers also organized a study group whereas each teacher studied a Reggio based book, sharing and learning from a discussion together.

What are your Chinese language skills?

All teachers in this interview are both fluent in Chinese Mandarin and English.

Chapter 5 Discussion /Analysis

Summary of Major Findings

From the interviews, the researcher found an ideal immersion program is not enough to teach the children how to read and write in Chinese. More importantly, teachers must teach them about the cultural component of the language. It is essential for students to understand the culture of the Chinese people, and prepare them with the skills to be independent speakers, and independent problem solvers while in Mainland China. In addition, creating a safe and a challenging classroom also plays a key factor for a successful immersion program.

Furthermore, at this age, the teachers while teaching the language have applied a lot of illustrations and gestures along with the strategy of repetition. This is a good way to encourage students to speak more and minimize the rate of students who constantly speaking English in the classroom.

On the other hand teachers state that find a balance of the expectations between western parents and Asian parents has been a major challenge. Western parents are easier to satisfied compared to Asian parents. For example, western parents would be happy if their child could sing Chinese songs, whereas Asian parents they might expect their child to be able to read and write at this stage. Besides, three teachers expressed their concerns

in not feel confident to organize a field trip, because they consider themselves to be foreigners.

With respect to professional development, preschool teachers state that school provides them with opportunities to visit other Reggio Emilia based schools to share and exchange ideas with other teachers. This is important for the teachers.

All teachers claim that parents might feel sad that they cannot help with their children in learning Chinese language. They do not know any Chinese language at all. Nevertheless, PK school provides parents with a weekly newsletter to indicate what their children have been learned at school including songs, vocabularies, phrases both translate in English and Chinese for parents to understand what is going on at school.

Comparison of Findings to Previous Research

From the interviews, teachers reported that it is important for young children to learn a new language at an early age. If students start this program very young and all their teachers are native Chinese speakers, the children develop Mandarin without an American accent. The children will be able think on an automatic level, without translating from one language to another. The research literature also supports this view.

Instructional strategies for preschool children must include a lot of pictures, illustrations, and gestures to help build verbal skills. All the teachers interviewed did not

want to push the children too much. Rather they wanted to create a safe and challenging learning environment to motivate children's learning of a second language.

Limitations/Gaps in the Study

This study only involved one school in an urban area in Northern California. The results are limited because the researcher could only interview a limited number of teachers.

Implications for Future Research

Going by the aforementioned findings, the U.S. government should increase the number of quality Chinese Mandarin immersion programs for young children to be able to acquire language. Although the US government has been on the forefront in supporting language immersion programs within its public learning institutions, approximately, most of these programs run in Spain with a few Arabic and Mandarin immersion program (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Furthermore, and increase in the numbers of quality immersion programs means we need more high quality bilingual teachers who have advanced language skills and the knowledge of how to teach a second language as well as value the future of the students (Lenker & Rhodes, 2007).

Conclusion

Every child is entitled to know that the globe exists beyond the scope of his or her imagination. This knowledge is helpful to them in their adult lives as they explore the

cultural and linguistic dimensions of the entire world. Bilingualism is itself a gift, important to anyone with a rich education portfolio. The ability to converse in more than one language is a futuristic treasure, enabling children to respect and appreciate different cultures, express themselves freely and to develop self-esteem.

About the Author

Yuan Cao received her undergraduate degree at University of Melbourne, Australia, in early childhood education. She completed her master's degree at Dominican University of California with a focus on Mandarin Chinese language programs. Preschool education is really important. It can shape a child's future life.

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