

EFFECTS OF THE ENGLISH INTRODUCTION IN EARLY AGES

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ABSTRACT

A great number of children are introduced in English learning at early ages, but, a great number is also deprived from it. The reason behind this differentiation is that researches have been in those two separate paths. Some researches point out the negative implications that bilingual children present, such as delayed language acquisition, increased interference and decreased vocabulary in each language, and difficulties in their social adaptation. Some others state and produce evidence on the positive effects like cognitive flexibility, greater social sensitivity, ability for abstract thinking, and greater language awareness. This study discusses these two contradictory perspectives in the light of the science and presents different effects children face when are introduced in English at early ages concluding that although a lot of studies are contradictory and each one has its own implications, positive effects tip the scales in favor of bilingualism and whereas children needs are covered and it is used a good methodological approach, the early age should not be relevant at all, even better, it is an advantage.

Keywords: Bilingual children, cognitive effects, language development, bilingualism disadvantages, English in childhood.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The current trend is starting the English teaching since children are in kindergarten or even before. It is commonly held that the faster the foreign language acquisition starts, the better results will be collected in this learning process. Nevertheless, it turns out to be important to analyze if the earlier learning of the foreign language to children can be considered as something advantageous or not. In this paper, previous researches about systematic effects of bilingualism in children will be analyzed. Some of the most common statements or myths of negative effects when exposing children to a foreign language will be addressed and confronted with authors and their research, in the light of science, as well as the positive effects found in bilingual children.

It is through a qualitative research, making use of thoughtful processes of analysis of researches- that the needed information will be collected as the basis of this project. After that, an analysis and interpretation of the gotten results will be carried out in order to determine the effects both positive and negative in children when they are exposed to English teaching when they are in this early age.

Significance of the Study

Bilingualism is today an increasingly widespread social phenomenon, among other things, due to the multicultural reality that thrives in the vast majority of cities around the world. The foreign language learning has been a highly controversial issue among children education and even today its advantages and disadvantages are still being discussed.

The foreign language acquisition nowadays supposes a support for personal and social development, besides increasing the possibilities of insertion in the professional world. The reality in which students and future citizens will have to perform, stands out as an increasingly globalized one, even can be thought English as an essential requirement, emphasizing the need for individuals to be competent in at least one additional language to the mother tongue.

Given the undeniable relevance that knowing a foreign language such as English has today, it turns out odd to realize that there are schools where children don't have the opportunity to be initiated in the acquisition of this language at their young age or, rather, due to their young age. Although this may be true it is worth asking: What kind of effects- whether positive or negative- do children have because of English learning at their young age? Is it beneficial that this first contact with the foreign language -English- be made at an early age, or is it one of many fashions that we face today?

It is not my intention to point out that it is totally beneficial to start children in a foreign language learning, or, on the contrary, to point out that it has only negative implications and that it is better to wait until pre-adolescence. In fact, many studies affirm that the sooner learning of a new language begins, the greater the chances of successfully acquiring it (Galán, 2012, p.5). On the other hand, some studies affirm that the communicative competence of the language foreigners is not benefited by the fact of starting their learning at an early age (Saunders, 1988).

Although there are many relevant issues involved, it is important to investigate and determine the effects that will be evident in children to initiate – in some cases- for the very first time the teaching of the foreign language and the incidents that this exercise will have in their mother tongue, social and cognitive aspects. The review of previous researches about it would serve as input to determine if it is a negative experience for children, not being taught a second language in early ages, or if, on the contrary, there is no evidence of any relevant impact that may affect the correct children's development.

Statement of the Problem

There is not just a few who point out the constant "need" for children to learn English from an earlier age at school. It is normal to talk about the world with the global idea in which English is the language of businesses and higher education, as the key that opens the "labor market door" and as a passport to success. However, the learning of the foreign language raises controversies within the Pre-school Education, and until today the benefits and disadvantages are still discussed. This is the current dilemma that many schools and parents face. Here is the problem: Start the English as a foreign language teaching in early ages despite the negative effects that scholars and common people state about it or just draw attention to positive ones well known by everyone.

An example of it is one the best public schools in Bogotá, which elementary students do not have English learning within their curricula, but it is until the sixth grade that they begin their immersion in the foreign language and not before. According to the directives of the institution, the fact of starting with learning English at an early age can hinder the correct development of the mother tongue in an early age, so it is preferred to allow it to be in primary school where

children reinforce the mother tongue to then be correctly willing to learn a second language when they are older.

That is just an example of one of the negative implications commonly held about the introduction of English in children. Among other negative consequences of early immersion to the new language are that bilingualism is a “mental burden” for children causing them confused and that, bilingual children more likely to have language difficulties, delays, or disorders.

It must be remembered though, that although many studies corroborate a greater plasticity in children to acquire phonological aspects which means that the sooner the language learning begins, the greater the guarantee of acquiring a native accent, many other studies show that communicative competence in the foreign language does not increase due to the simple fact of beginning their learning in the school environment. Therefore, the research question around which this project will revolve around will be: What effects, both positive and negative, would be found if children were introduced in English language learning?

Taking into account the fact that the objective of all educational action is the fully development of the students’ potential, this study seeks to determine the correct choice based on the performed investigation.

Objectives

General Objective

To identify some effects, both positive and negative that could be found when children are introduced in English as a foreign language learning.

Specific Objectives

-To restate the negative implications found when decided teaching English in early ages and compare them with previous researches about it.

-To identify the positive effects that bilingual children have for their early introduction to the new language and contrast them with previous papers and investigations about it.

-To conclude the effects, positive and / or negative, that would occur as a result of the introduction of the foreign language to children despite their early ages.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language Development in Children

It's not a secret for everyone that the matter about how we learn a language has fascinated scholars for years. It turns out to be amazing how little children who don't even walk or feed for themselves, are able to construct new sentences without knowing something about grammar rules. The undeniable truth is that children are perfectly capable to master a language system and at an age when they're not able for logical or analytical thought. Awake! Magazine (1987), states that most scientists thus believe that the ability to learn a language is inborn, ability that unfolds during a child's early years.

One of the questions of this study tries to determine if it's the most propitious moment for children to begin the incorporation of a foreign language at their early ages. Given that, it is necessary and indispensable to define in this way, in broad strokes, the period of life covered by the preschool age as such, since from the establishment of this definition, basic concepts about the valuation of the mother tongue are derived, and this is something that learning a new language requires to take into account.

It is commonly held that children have an easiness for acquiring new languages that is preprogrammed on their genetic map and that they only depend on the interaction with others to boost this ability. Children have a great easiness to interact and create links with others and this

contributes to language development in a very positive way. After birth, children have a great ability to produce the sounds of any language; what happens is that the sounds of the language which the child is in contact with are generally reinforced and the other sounds are falling into disuse.

Assessing from a qualitative approach, which allows the determination of the basic psychological structures that underlie each external manifestation of the language, Martínez (2004) establishes the following stages present in the development of language:

1. Lactation Stage. At this stage there is a significant particularity, and it is none other than the homogenization of children's verbal manifestations. Breastfeeding is a stage of preparation of the basic structures of the tongue in which the differentiation of sounds begins. After the undifferentiated gurgle of the first months, the syllabification arises. All children babble in the same way, but the syllabification is closely related to the distinctive sounds of each language. That is where the first influences of the mother tongue appear.

2. From 1 to 3 years old. At this stage the demonstration of individual verbal behaviors that diverge from the norm stands out. A group of children may show a co-developing language development, while another of the same age cannot. At this stage there is the critical moment of the explosion of language where the basic structures of the language find their initial conformation here.

3. From 4 to 7 years old. In this stage the basic structures of the language are consolidated and perfected. There are no significant differences in boys and girls with respect to the adult stage in terms of their configuration, although they differ in their content, which occurs due to their greater experience and knowledge of the world. At this stage there is also an inequality, in this case, in the different components of the language. Thus, there may be children

who, even having a broad knowledge of vocabulary, are unable to form sentences with a certain level of difficulty. At the same time, although they have a broad vocabulary they use many words of which they do not really understand their meaning.

Accordingly with that, these characteristics need to be taken into account when reflecting on the possibilities of assimilation of the mother tongue, and also when incorporating a second language since, as authors such as Canale and Swain (1995) affirm, the skills that children have created in their native language facilitate the incorporation of a second language.

After born, brains children cannot master language development. That doesn't mean that they stop trying it though. Some scholars like Gesell (1934), state that babbles and gurgles made by a baby is a part of the process of language development, a "rehearsal of sorts for his later enunciating of words" As children in their earlier stages have difficulties with vocalization, their brains are also preparing themselves for language acquisition. There's now an interesting detail about language development in preschool children, although child's body arises a moment where its development reduces the speed – which happens in his preteen years- child's brain reaches 90% of its adult weight by age of five. That brings to light an important truth: the first five years of children's life are a critical learning period, particularly the first two. After all normal brain's processes between 15 and 24 first months of old, now child is ready to handle the learning of language. Thus, it is critical that child be exposed to language during these early years (Awake! magazine, 1987)

The process of learning takes place when the child makes contact with an environment in which the language in question is spoken, and thanks to social interaction that language is developed. Therefore, the learning process is an unconscious process where children learn to speak without explicit instruction. This process ends around the age of five -according to some

authors, and seven according to some others- when all the children in the world can speak their mother tongue fluently and effortlessly

Definition of Bilingualism

In order to successfully address the problems related to bilingual education, it is necessary to clarify and define the concept of bilingualism. From an individual perspective, Siguán and Mackey (1986) propose to designate as bilinguals the people who add any degree of knowledge of a new language to the spontaneous domain they possess of their own language. This brings to light a fundamental truth: the perfect bilingual does not exist. This is because no one has an equivalent domain of two languages and can use them with the same success in any situation. What can be found are people who have unequal competence in two or more languages and can use them with the same efficiency depending on the situations. “Familiar bilinguals” also appear in this context, who simultaneously acquires the competence of both languages from the cradle or before the first three years of life.

Martínez (2004) defines bilingualism as the ability for speaking and communicating in two different languages. In this simple definition, fundamental statements are made for the understanding of what it means to speak and communicate in two different languages, and that it is necessary to have well-defined concepts so as not to assume that it is bilingual when the conditions established in its definition are not satisfied.

This involves considering:

1. Bilingualism means speaking, reading and writing in two different languages.
2. Bilingualism implies having the ability to understand the meaning of what others intend to communicate by oral or written means.

This means that the process of bilingualism implies not only the assimilation of the verbal and graphic symbols of the new language, but also allows communication with those who speak it. Communication activity, then, constitutes a core aspect of learning a new language and if this is not achieved, it cannot be affirmed that this language has been mastered yet.

The subject may master the specific skills of reading and writing, which he does in the first years of life, but even when such skills have not been formed, there is the possibility of effective communication as the most important criterion to take in consideration. That is why it should be noted that many combinations of bilingualism can be given, such as:

1. Having the ability to speak and be understood in two languages.
2. Being able to speak both, but write only in one of them.
3. Understanding both languages, but speak only one.
4. Reading, writing and translating the foreign language, but be unable to speak it.
5. Any other possible combination, which involves the lack of a certain skill
(reading, writing, communication)

The above is related in the same way to the own peculiarities of the language development milestones, which condition not only the possibilities of formation of the mother tongue, but any other language that is pretended to learn. Therefore, it is important to know deeply the development of this evolutionary process for the elaboration of any program or system of methodologies aimed at its formation, both in terms of mother tongue and the foreign language.

Difference between ‘language’ and ‘tongue’. For the purpose of this project, it is necessary to explain concepts such as language and tongue, as it is important to highlight the difference in order to understand the appropriate use according to the context and the meaning.

The term *language* is commonly used in reference to man's cognitive ability to communicate through various sign systems. However complex the infants' mother tongue is, they acquire it sequentially and use it properly without the need of formal education, through a mechanism that the brain uses when children listen to extract grammar rules.

The word *tongue*, on the other hand, is commonly used to refer to the verbal and almost always written communication system, typical of a human community. Therefore, tongue is conceived as the natural language used by a social group. Tongues favor in human social communication the management of referential content, that is, the knowledge and speech acts indispensable for interaction. It is not a secret to anyone, that language does not consist of a single dimension, on the contrary, one can examine the linguistic abilities of a person according to their ability to listen (understand), speak, read and write. Within these four dimensions of language there are many variables, and also many levels between people who have just begun to learn a second language and those who already speak well in two languages.

Mother tongue teaching vs. foreign language teaching. In many countries students go to school their mother tongue has already been established and teaching in this case may involve learning to read and write a language which the children can already speak. The children have already benefited from thousands of hours of contact with their mother tongue. In the case of a foreign language however, the starting point may be zero, and a limited amount of time may be available in school for foreign language instruction. In this case a careful structured and gradual introduction to the foreign language is normally used, based on a corpus of the most frequent words, phrases and structures.

Teaching English in Childhood:

The age factor in the foreign language learning has been studied for decades. Cohen proposes to learn a foreign language as soon as possible provided that teaching takes place in situations of natural learning (Cohen et. Al, 1989) That is, to ensure an enabling environment that meets the basic communication needs of students. On the other hand, opposite thesis to the early teaching of a foreign language can be also found. Candelier and Hermann-Brenecke (1993) in their research point out that learning a foreign language should be postponed at later ages than the early ones because, as they point out, they have a greater cognitive development for learning the grammatical effects of the new language at that age. They affirm that with the learning of one language they develop skills that facilitate the learning of others (especially, of the comprehensive skills). It is true that, an early immersion to the students, will allow them a better functional range using the foreign language than those that are exposed later, in addition that the first group will be more fluent and will feel more comfortable than those of the second group.

In like manner, Gesell was one of the first researchers to state the question of the most propitious time to start learning a foreign language. He suggested that it was indispensable than second language study begin before the age of 10 and it would be better before a child begins formal education.

Gesell insists on children less than ten years old are emotionally predisposed to learn a second or a foreign language because children of those early ages still view languages as fun and playful. Developmentally, they are still ready to learn and to communicate. As he himself states it, "The young child below the age of 10 enjoys language experience... With favorable motivation, he is emotionally amenable to a second or even a third language." (Gesell 1946)

It is also important to point out the intellectual readiness of early stages in life. Frances Ilg, Gesell's colleague, describes children of those critical ages as "group-minded, expansive, and receptive" (Ilg, 1946). So, it could be said that in this specific case to children assimilation of the foreign language, the moment where children are introduced in very first time has a deep relevance, and that doesn't only have to do with the moment of the language process in which this appropriation has to occur, but of all its general psychological development.

As it has been said before, there are different conclusions about teaching English in early ages with their own implications involved. Next, some researches are presented in order to establish the positive and negative effects in children when learning the foreign language at their age.

Negative effects in bilingual children, myths and realities. First of all, it must be mentioned that some of most popular negative beliefs against bilingualism in early ages are based on myths or misinterpretations, rather than scientific findings. That's why, some of those statements will be faced next with the science says about.

Bilingual children get confused when using both languages at their age. This is the first attitude that is often understood as a negative effect in bilingual children. Regarding this attitude, Saunders (1988) argued that children are conducted to language mixing and language confusion which in turn results in a decrease in intelligence and a reduction in the ability to think. But, as it has been said, this is a misunderstood behavior. It has been taken as an example of confusion, the fact that child mixes words from two languages in the same phrase, but instead of looking it as a negative effect, it has been accepted as it really is. In linguistic, it is called code mixing, and it is perfectly common, a normal part of bilingual development. A similar effect can be appreciated in monolingual children too; like them, bilingual children are sometimes limited

by their linguistic resources. A clear example of it is a monolingual 2- years-old child who uses the word “dad” to call any man he meets; he uses his limited vocabulary to name things he knows. In like manner, when a bilingual child doesn’t know or can’t quickly find the accurate word in one language, he might take the word from the other he does know well. Instead of being a sign of confusion, code mixing can be accepted as a sign of bilingual children’s resourcefulness.

Bilingual children show a later formation of the basic structures of both languages, which can be a true language delay. This can also be observed in some particular issues of its evolutionary course in the early years. In studies conducted on bilingualism in communities in which a foreign language predominates, it is revealed that when the child speaks, his dominant language acquires an accent that usually remains a lifetime, presents more grammatical errors in his native language than his contemporaries of the same age and consequently hesitates to use this language that causes communication and acceptance problems in context. This added to the personality of an impressionable or nervous child, can make the emotional tension he feels heighten his general problem of communication and, therefore, of language.

Conversely, some researches revealed an important early bilingual children’s characteristic that may explain this misunderstanding; It is normal that bilingual children know fewer words in both language than monolingual ones know in their only language, but, when it is calculated bilingual children’s “conceptual vocabulary” across both languages, this difference disappears. Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams (2013). convert this supposed handicap in a an advantage saying that, if you add together known words in each language, then bilingual children know approximately the same number or even more words than monolingual children.

In the light of previous statements, I can be said that early bilinguals- in the same way than young monolinguals- have learning abilities and skills that can be initiated in a success manner on expected vocabulary; it is just a time matter.

Bilingual children present more difficulties in their communication which affect negatively their social adaptation. The child with difficulties in his communication as a result of his bilingualism, realizes that his way of speaking causes murmuring, laughter or rejection in other children, this can become a problem so acute that he rejects, in turn, communicate verbally, which can easily lead him to isolate himself from others, take refuge in himself, and not participate in common activities, which then reinforces the language problem that he presents and makes it more acute and resistant to educational action.

Positive effects in bilingual children, what the science says. Some studies such as Vale and Feunteun (1995), it is proven that bilingual children have a greater cognitive ability in general:

1. They are mentally more flexible.
2. They have mayor ability for abstract thinking.
3. They are ahead of monolingual children as far as divergent thinking is concerned, because they have more ability to consider different perspectives.
4. Show greater social sensitivity.
5. Early bilingual children are more open to the unknown.
6. Bilingual children have a greater linguistic awareness. The knowledge of several languages favors mastery of the mother tongue and they are able to extract meanings and

structures faster context. They reflect on language and experience by playing. It is also easier for them to learn new languages than monolingual children.

With the learning of a foreign language, children not only learn to express their ideas differently, but their learning is associated with the approach to a culture different than the one that belongs to the mother tongue. Álvarez & Del Río (1990) also point out that, when children's minds open to bilingualism, they find multiple benefits such as strengthening individual and social development and increasing the ability to empathize with others. It can increase the ability to concentrate and strengthen self-esteem.

The acquisition of a foreign language in young children is quite similar to the acquisition of their mother tongue, which is natural and does not require effort. Therefore, an early start in learning the foreign language is essential to achieve the proficiency levels of a native speaker, especially in pronunciation and intonation. Starting early also has another advantage, and it can model the global process of children by being in a phase where development is very dynamic, and in favorable circumstances, early learning of a foreign language improves communicative awareness in the mother tongue, and does not cause confusion delaying development. On the contrary, bilingualism helps stimulate cognitive skills (Johnstone, 2002)

Recent studies states that the critical periods of language learning close as time goes by (Curtiss, 1996) This "window" of understanding for total brain learning, including the acquisition of the syntax of a language goes away closing at five or six years of age, that is why the ability to learn a foreign language suffers a sharp decline after six years. Curtiss (1996) also indicates that after this critical period, the brain slowly transforms its plasticity and when a child reaches adolescence, his brain can no longer normally develop any new cognitive system, including language.

After the studies carried out over the years, childhood is presented as a great moment to start learning a foreign language also because of two important circumstances or facts, which summarize this section regarding the age factor, as García and Vicente affirm (2003):

a) In the early ages, the ear is virgin, because it is not configured by the marks of the mother tongue and, therefore, has a greater plasticity to capture different types of sound waves. As a child grows up in a single language, their ability to capture and distinguish phonemes different from those of that language goes away, as you know, listening well is the first requirement to produce correctly.

b) In childhood there is a natural predisposition to learn and want to learn a language. This predisposition, often unconscious, and always linked to physical and emotional needs, that is, to the emotional and relational world of the boy or girl, who already uses his first babble to demand affection, male macho, ask for food, request participation in the game, etc. That is, from the beginning the language serves the baby as a privileged instrument to identify emotions, desires and needs, explore the world around him, interact with his peers, solve problems or conflicts, etc.

It could be summarized then that the fact of introducing the foreign language at an early age is not so relevant but rather, the methodological approach that will be used for this same effect.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study will be carried out throughout a qualitative approach. The framework or plan will be the exploratory research, used as a guide in data collection and analysis. A thoroughly investigation will be performed in order to provide a better understanding of the situation in the context in which it is necessary to go into detail about. No topic in the acquisition of a language matter causes as many discussions as introducing children to learning at an early age. There are many opinions about it, but the truth is that none is entirely conclusive. Despite all that, in this case, a research based on literature will be executed in order to define the stated problem in data analysis. For that purpose, information from referenced research previously published in primary research from sources like case studies, magazines, journals, books, articles or notes, will be gather to get a more precise idea of the subject and to conclude concrete effects of bilingualism in children and thus, obtain a conscious approach to the subject of study

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

It's time to present the objective results found on the previous research. The ability to learn a language is inborn, ability that unfolds during children's early years (Awake! Magazine, 1987) Language development in children is basically a process divided in three important stages that ends around the ages of 5 to 7 (Martínez, 2004). Each one of these stages discloses particularities related to how children acquire their mother language and how it is connected with the acquisition of a new one. In the first stage (lactation) when the syllabification -that is closely related to the distinctive sounds of each language- starts, it also appears the former influence of the mother tongue that, in turn, is the brain's preparation of the basic structures of the language in which differentiation of sounds begins. The next stage (1 to 3 years old) is the critical moment of the explosion of language because is the time where those basic structures of the language find their initial conformation. And, in the last stage (4-7 years old), despite the basic structures of the language are consolidated and perfected, there is always an inequality where some children are unable to form sentences with a certain level of difficulty, even if they have a broad knowledge of vocabulary.

Those previous abilities that children have created in their native language development, instead of retard it; they facilitate the incorporation of a new language (Canale & Swain, 1995). As the term of language development in children finishes at the age of five, these first years of

children's life are a critical learning period, the brain is ready to handle the language learning, and all children in the world can speak their mother tongue fluently and effortlessly.

Regarding to bilingual people – people who has the ability for speaking and communicating in two different languages (Martínez, 2004) - can be found several and no conclusive statements when those bilinguals are children. There are researches that point out several negative effects, some of them, based on popular beliefs, myths or interpretations. The most common is that bilingual children get confused when using both languages at their early age (Saunders, 1988). According to that, children are conducted to a language mixing and language confusion that, in turn, results in a decrease in intelligence and a reduction in the ability to think. In Linguistic, this is called “code mixing” and this is often confused with a handicap in bilingual children, but has been demonstrated that this is perfectly normal effect seen not only in bilingual children, but also in monolingual too. It is part of the normal development of a creative and hard-worked-child's-brain.

Another effect found in bilingual children is that they show a later formation of the basic structures of both languages, which can be a true language delay. This, in fact, could be an advantage instead of a negative effect because if the known words in each language are taken into account, then bilingual children know approximately the same number or even more words than monolingual children. Other effect on bilingual children is that they present more difficulties in their communication which affect negatively their social adaptation. This can be that children reject to communicate verbally, which constitutes a real undesirable consequence in early ages.

On the other hand, among positive effects in teaching English in early ages are that children are mentally more flexible, they have major ability for abstract thinking, they are ahead

of monolingual children as far as divergent thinking is concerned, because they have more ability to consider different perspectives, show greater social sensitivity; the knowledge of several languages favors mastery of the mother tongue and they are able to extract meanings and structures faster context, it is also easier for them to learn new languages than monolingual children (Vale & Feunteun, 1995)

Childhood is presented as the best moment to start learning a foreign language because after first years of life, the brain transforms its plasticity and when a child reaches adolescence, his brain can no longer normally develop any new cognitive system, including language (Curtiss, 1996)

García & Vicente, 2003, have found that, in childhood there is a natural predisposition to learn a language, and conclude that the fact of introducing the foreign language at an early age is not so relevant but rather, the methodological approach that will be used for this same effect.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Speaking two languages obviously requires more effort than speaking one. It is not surprising, then, to find that the use of a second or a foreign language is associated with more widespread brain activation patterns. Selection and alternation in languages requires additional attention resources. However, the specific pattern of brain activity in each language depends on the management of it, and probably on a variety of situational conditions. Children in their first years of living are in the best moment for acquiring a second language and even a third. Their brains are ready for this, in fact, they are waiting for it.

For years, researchers has discussed about if it is better teaching English or any other language in early ages or not. Some of negative effects present in bilingual children such as delayed language acquisition, increased interference and decreased vocabulary in each language, and difficulties in their social adaptation can be a sign for avoiding the introduction of children to the foreign language. Although this may be true, during this paper the first two negative effects has been explained in the light of the science and they have been understood as misinterpretations of normal processes in language development even evidenced in monolingual children and just a matter of time. On the other hand, it has to be said that the last one really presents a handicap for bilingual children, but, if objectively this matter is compared with the positive effects also found when teaching English in early ages, like cognitive flexibility, greater

social sensitivity, ability for abstract thinking, and a greater language awareness, it could be clear for parents and teachers that the earlier to introduce the child in English learning, the better.

Despite this is a discussion with endless perspectives and statements, something that can be deduced from this paper is that some factors affect the positive or negative effects of bilingualism and whereas, children needs are covered and it is used a good methodological approach, the early age should not be relevant at all, even better, it is an advantage. That's because language represents the most important instrument of human cognition and the possibility of resorting to two different languages can increase the individual's cognitive resources. The threshold hypothesis represents an attempt to integrate the positive and negative effects of bilingualism. The negative consequences might seem enormous but a solid learning of both languages can result in important cognitive and academic advantages for children.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The acquisition of English as a foreign language currently represents a guarantee of personal and social development, access to culture, deepening in knowledge and labor insertion. The ability to express in several languages constitutes, without any doubt, a priority objective in an educational system of quality that aspires to the integral formation of children. With that in mind, it is important to understand the processes of language development and see the similarities that exist with the acquisition processes of the foreign language in early ages in order to understand how positive effects favor it, and how to successfully deal with negative implications that bilingual children face. It is also important to take into account the different contexts in which children learn the foreign language and exploit the circumstances to the top and adapt them to children's needs to get better results. The only true is that despite a lot of studies are contradictory, positive effects incline the balance in favor of bilingualism and whereas children needs are covered and it is used a good methodological approach, the early age should not be relevant at all, even better, it could be an advantage.

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