

# **The Disadvantages of Bilingual Education for children in Saudi**

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## Table of contents

* Abstract.....	3
* Introduction.....	3
* LITERATURE REVIEW:.....	4-5
* Significant of research:.....	5
*Research Questions .....	5-6
* Research Methodology. ....	6
*Ethical Consideration .....	6
*Limitations of the study .....	6
*Expected Results.....	6-7
*Conclusion. ....	7
*References .....	7
*Appendix .....	8

## Abstract

This study focuses on the outcome of being bilingual for children between 6 and 12 years old. Is being bilingual beneficial for children? Does it have negatives, or it is always useful? Many children are learning more than two languages in Saudi Arabia, and this type of education has some impact on the mother tongue of the children, Arabic in this case. We will use surveys and interviews to determine those impacts. The outcome of this research will benefit parents in Saudi Arabia to find solutions to the negative impacts that exist when being bilingual.

## Introduction

Since English is the second language that is being taught in Saudi Arabia due to its importance as it is almost the language of the world, bilingual education has excessively increased. Many Saudis think bilingual education is always beneficial for their children. However, this is not the case. My children are bilingual, and I have experienced the impact of them being bilingual. We will list the impact as advantages and disadvantages with the help of our outcome from the interviews and surveys that has been conducted with some elementary students' parents. We will find solutions to the disadvantages to develop our children's dual language.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Writers focused on debates about whether bilingual education has advantages more than disadvantages. They keep mentioning the disadvantages:

\* Stephen Krashen mentioned that "those who read well in one language, read well in the second language". However, other subjects are taught in one language and the focus is on one language; as a result, the other language can easily get weak. There only one way to keep both languages strong, which I will discuss in my research, is that parent should focus on the other language at home and the first language is already being focused on in school.

Other debate subjects are about the understanding of concepts and translation actions.

\* Jim Cummins said that "children can't learn in a language they don't understand" where he meant that some terms and concepts in other schools subjects are difficult to translate and are difficult to understand by a language that it is not their mother tongue. In my research, I will introduce ideas that help the parents to make their children use a way of thinking that prevent them from translating words or sentences instead use the meaning as a new meaning that they should take as it is. That will reduce the process of thinking and effectively get the right meaning.

Another common disadvantage is that learning hours in bilingual schools are more than the hours used in other regular schools. Children come home with no power and they need time to rest. In my research I will help parents to organize the daily schedule of their children to find ways to recharge their children's power and get them ready to learn and exercise the skills of both languages.

### Significance of Research

The importance of using the right ways, skills and techniques to educate Saudi children bilingual education since Arabic is their mother tongue and the language of their religion and English is becoming the language of the world in life and business.

### Research Questions

- Do your children tend to speak one language more than the other?  
why?
- What are your observations on your children while conversations? Do they have different meanings to some sentences when you switch between Arabic and English? Does this happen when they learn other subjects like science and geology?

- Do your children seem tired and exhausted when they return from school? Do they seem as tired when in holydays? Are the extra hours they spend in schools the reason of their tiredness?

## Research Methodology

The methodology is to ensure that we are using reliable sources to support our surveys and interviews. These sources are actually the parents of the students. The disadvantages of the bilingual education can be a point of view of one or several persons or writers; but to support this point of view and assure that there are disadvantages, we use questions directed to the parents. For instance, a question to a parent says "what are your observations on your children while conversations?". The parent responses that when his child is relaxed, he speaks using the second language; however, if he is nervous, excited or angry, he speaks his mother tongue. Using this information, we can indicate that the child feels more comfortable using his mother tongue, and when relaxing, he uses the second language like accessory. As a result, switching could mean there are comfortable and uncomfortable sides which is a sign of strength in a language and weakness in the other, and that goes under the first disadvantage.

As an advantage, another parent can answer the same question differently. The child tend to speak one language all the time regardless of the language. The parents may assign a day or two per week where the child can speak the other language to assure that both languages are equally strong.

### **Ethical Consideration**

We will take into consideration the confidentiality of the parents personal information. Any information that are sensitive or personal will not be published unless we have permission to do so.

### **Limitations of the study**

The study including surveys and interviews will take place sometime during the mid of schools semesters. The study will be limited to parents of bilingual children who are between 6 to 12 years old.

### **Expected Results**

I expect that the result of the negative impact or the disadvantages of bilingual educations are going to be as the following:

1. Distract children from focusing and concentrating in one language.
2. Confuse the children in understanding some concepts of other subjects such as science.

3. Bilingual schools exhaust children by having them to attend extra hours.

## Conclusion

Being bilingual is beneficial in all meanings only if it is practiced using the right way. Moreover, if parents concentrate on teaching their parents both languages equally, use skills and techniques of not using word by word translation but instead the meaning and concept as a whole, and timely organize the schedule of the children to maximize the benefit of their time, bilingual education will always be beneficial.

## References

- Jim Cummins. Bilingual Children's Mother Tongue. Available:

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## Appendix

**Survey:**



Which of the following is a disadvantage of bilingual education, you may select more than one answer:

- (A) Focusing in one language and ignoring the original language.
- (B) Difficult to understand meaning and concepts of school subjects.
- (C) Children return from school exhausted with no power to learn more.
- A & B
- A & C
- B & C

**Interview:**

- Do your children tend to speak one language more than the other? why?
- What are your observations on your children while conversations? Do they have different meanings to some sentences when you switch between Arabic and English? Does this happens when they learn other subjects like science and geology?
- Do your children seem tired and exhausted when they return from school? Do they seem as tired when in holydays? Are the extra hours they spend in schools the reason of their tiredness?