

Chapter 2

Language Development and Cultural Identity of Children from Multilingual Families in Taiwan

Abstract It is a rather complex issue to investigate the development of children growing up in a family where different languages and cultures encounter. A fair investigation approach must take into account all related factors, such as possible combinations of family/cultural backgrounds, amounts and types of exposures to the L1s, the natures and status of the L1s in the society, the socio-economic backgrounds of the family, the attitudes of the parents, peers, schools, general public, and society, physical environments, social contexts, and many more. Chapter 2 presents a survey study about how children from multilingual families in Taiwan perceived their linguistic and academic development at school and how they identified themselves in the society where Chinese language and culture dominates. Their responses to the survey were triangulated with the surveys responded by their homeroom teachers, and with the interviews with a few children and their homeroom teachers. This chapter portrays the multiphase images of CMF and lays a ground for further investigation of their narrative development.

Keywords Language development • Cultural identity • Survey • Parental support • Academic achievement • Schooling

2.1 Introduction

It is a rather complex issue to investigate the development of children growing up in a family where different languages and cultures encounter. A fair investigation approach must take into account all related factors, such as possible combinations of family/cultural backgrounds, amounts and types of exposures to the L1s, the natures and status of the L1s in the society, the socio-economic backgrounds of the family, the attitudes of the parents, peers, schools, general public, and society, physical environments, social contexts, and many more (Baker 2000; Cunningham-Anderson and Anderson 1999; Grosjean 1989). Surveying seems to be an effective research method to approach reasonably many target CMF at once, and provide a

general picture about this groups of children. However, it should not been the only method. This chapter will present a socio-cultural survey study about a group of CMF in Taiwan to reveal what the children perceived themselves and how their teacher evaluated them in terms of their academic performances, language developments, and self-identity in the society.

2.2 Differentiating Children from Mixed Marriage and from Immigrant Families

Cunningham-Anderson and Anderson (1999) pointed out that every child from a multilingual family is unique in terms of his/her language and social development. Baker (2000) and Grosjean (1989) explained that being exposed to continuous natural input of more than one language and culture from infancy poses critical impacts on a child's development in personality, cognition, and social attitude. Searching for their ethnic identity along with learning their parents' L1s is part of CMF's life from birth. Therefore, the issues faced by children growing up in a multilingual and multicultural environment are very different from what young immigrants (hence, YI) encounter in the host country (Dirim and Hieronymus 2003; Hinnenkamp 2003; Jørgenson 2003). The YI often struggle between their "home language/culture" and the "mainstream language/culture" outside the home environment. Sociologist Liebkind (1995) investigated the social behaviors of YI in Finland and suggested that YI's proficiency of the two languages (i.e., their ethnic and the societal languages) do not play such a critical role in the process of ethnic identity search. Liebkind viewed *bicultural identity* as a purely psychological development, in which it matters how one perceives oneself, as well as how others perceive this individual in the society. Thus, if one does not take an integrative attitude toward the two (or more) cultures involved, s/he will not truly possess a bicultural identity (Liebkind 1995; Liebkind et al. 2004).

Liebkind's psychological view about identity development is applicable to YI, but may be partially valid in the case of CMF. This view overlooks one distinctive difference between YI and CMF: the contexts where the two cultures take place in the children's growing up process. For YI, the ethnic and host culture(s) can be clearly separated; thus, YI's struggles root in the pressure of making a choice between the two cultures, as well as in adapting to the differences between the home and the societal cultures. For CMF, however, the integration, or sometimes struggles, between two cultures take place within the family contexts from birth. The decision making process of cultural identity is also more internal, rather than external, compared to the case of YI.

In addition to the issue of self-identify, language development is also a critical issue for the YI and CMF. Similar to the cultural identity, YI face a home language and a societal language, especially when they reach the school age. The two languages are often learned in a sequential order, and the concern is rather on whether

both can be maintained with the same effort. It is often the case that the societal language develops to be a stronger one for survival reasons. However, CMF face different concerns in their language development. CMF often encounter both parents' L1s from birth. As to how far the two L1s can be developed depends on many more factors, beyond self-decision and societal pressure.

There had been quite some studies focusing on the multilingual development of YI (for examples, Byram 1998; Huls and Van de Mond 1992; Jørgenson 2003; Sonderregger and Barrett 2004a, b; Wilton and Constantine 2003), and on children growing up in regions where there are two or more official languages, such as in Quebec, Basque country, Luxembourg, Catalonia, and Spanish-speaking areas in the US (for example, Cenoz and Genes 1998; Cenoz 1998; Gardner and Lambert 1972; Gersten et al. 1992; Hoffman 1998; Lambert and Tucker 1972). These studies arrived at diverse results regarding general academic performances of bilingual vs. monolingual children at school and the parents' attitudes towards supporting bilingual developments for their children. Some claimed that bilingual children were indifferent from monolingual children in their cognitive development, but some concluded that bilingual children performed not only worse than their monolingual peers in language arts, but also had less satisfactory performance in science and other subjects.

According to Baker (2000), although some parents of mixed marriage use their own L1s in daily lives, they do not support their children's multilingual developments. These parents believe that learning more than one language in infancy will slow down a child's normal language and even cognitive development, and consequently will result in academic disadvantages of their children after they enter the school. Parents holding this view would encourage their children to first master the mainstream language, which is sometimes neither of their own L1s. Some parents were even skeptical about sending their children to receive bilingual education at school where official support was available due to their deep belief in some so called "official reports" about the poorer academic performances of bilingual children, compared to monolingual children (Krashen 1996).

2.3 The Study

The purpose of this survey study is to portrait a general picture about the CMF in Taiwan regarding their language development and cultural identity. The study investigated the following three areas: (1) the multilingual development of the CMF in Taiwan; (2) the relationship between the CMF's multilingual development and their academic performance; and (3) the CMF's cultural identity evolution. Two surveys, a student questionnaire targeting the CMF (hence, SQ) and a teacher questionnaire targeting their home room teachers (hence, TQ) at elementary school level were designed to answer the following questions:

- (a) What is the current situation of the CMF's multilingual development?
- (b) What factors contribute to and/or obstruct their multilingual development?
- (c) How do the CMF perform at school in comparison to their peers with two Taiwanese parents?
- (d) How do the bilingual and the monolingual CMF perform at school in general?
- (e) How do the bilingual and the monolingual CMF perform in specific subject areas?
- (f) How do the CMF perceive themselves in the society?
- (g) How do others (e.g., their classmates, teachers, and strangers) perceive the CMF in the society?
- (h) Which culture do the CMF identify themselves toward? Why so?

The SQ was designed for CMF studying in elementary schools with a focus on their perceptions towards their own development in language(s) and self-identities. The TQ was prepared for the homeroom teachers of the CMF, with a focus on the CMF's academic performance and their social relationship with others at school.

The study took place between 2005 and 2006 in five school districts of Tainan metropolitan area, with a total population around 800,000. With the assistance of the Educational Bureau of Tainan City, an invitation letter was sent out to all 44 elementary schools in the area, explaining the purposes and procedures of the study. Thirty-two schools responded positively and agreed to take part in the study. The researcher with three graduate students visited each of the participating schools to help the target children complete the questionnaires. Both questionnaires were written in Chinese, but for the sake of the young children who were not yet competent in reading, *Zhuyin fuhou*, a phonetic notation system for transcribing written Mandarin Chinese, was printed beside each character. In some cases, the children filled in the questionnaires with the help of their teachers or their parents.

Altogether 188 CMF and 135 of their homeroom teachers answered the questionnaires. Among the 188 CMF, 162 had non-Chinese mothers, while 26 had non-Chinese fathers. This 6.2:1 ratio presumably reflects the state of bi-ethnic marriages of Taiwanese with foreign spouses announced by the Ministry of Interior in 2005. We found that the non-Chinese mothers mostly came from Southeast Asia, taking about 96.8 % of the total 162 CMF with non-Chinese mothers. The nationalities of the mothers included Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Only a few mothers were from Northeast Asia (1.8 %; from Japan and Korea) or America (0.6 %; from the US and Argentine). The non-Chinese fathers came from a greater variety of regions, including Southeast Asia (26.8 %), Northeast Asia (30.8 %), America (23 %), Europe (15.4 %), and Middle East (3.8 %).

With the help of the homeroom teachers, individual interviews with some children were arranged after they filled up the questionnaires. A few parents expressed their interest of the study, and agreed to receive the interview with their children after school.

2.4 Results of the Survey

2.4.1 Family Support and the CMF's Multilingual Development

Responding to the question: *Can you understand (including very well and a little bit) your non-Chinese parent's L1?* 81.6 % of the children with non-Chinese fathers (FCMF) said: *Yes*, while only 55.1 % of those with non-Chinese mothers (MCMF) said: *Yes*. Due to the subjective nature of our discussion, we refer the children as *bilingual*, if they claimed they could *understand* their non-Chinese parents' L1s (i. e., with the ability to listen to their non-Chinese parents' speeches), and the children as *monolingual*, otherwise. There were surely different degrees of bilingualism, which required proper measurement by standardized tests. In this survey study, the evaluation was by the children's own perceptions. When asking the bilingual children how competent they were in their non-Chinese parents' L1, 78 % of the bilingual FCMF said they had no difficulty communicating with their fathers, while only 46 % of the bilingual MCMF gave similar claims. In general, only slightly more than half of the total number of children claimed to be bilinguals, and only 37 % among these bilingual children claimed to be competent in their non-Chinese parents' L1s. Since our respondents were very different in age, these figures only indicate that the majority of the observed CMF were in transition, and that multiple language use was not a primary concern in many of these mixed marriage families. The large percentage of monolingual Taiwanese CMF reflects a social nature concerning the process of giving up one of the two parents' native languages for sake of adapting to the main stream society.

Language proficiency includes not only oral communication, but also the ability of reading and writing. Normally, the development of speaking and understanding one's L1 starts from infancy, but the development of L1 reading and writing does not begin until school age. Only the reading and writing abilities determine whether one is *literate* in the society. Our CMF respondents all learned how to read and write Chinese at school, just like their peers with both Taiwanese parents. According to the TQ, our CMF participants demonstrated *indifferent* proficiency in Mandarin Chinese from the average Taiwanese children of similar age. This finding is similar to the results indicated in the MOE's report, which suggests that CMF actually performed rather well compared to the average Taiwanese children (Ministry of Education 2004).

It was a more difficult question to answer when asking our respondents' development in their non-Chinese parents' L1s. Due to the fact that there was no official support in the Taiwanese school system to the teaching and learning of the CMF's non-Chinese L1s, except for those whose other L1 was English, the parents had to take the full responsibility in teaching their children their second L1s. To get a general picture about how the four language skills of the CFM's non-Chinese L1s were developed, we asked our CMF respondents to make a self-evaluation of their non-Chinese L1s in listening (L), speaking (S), reading (R), and writing (W)

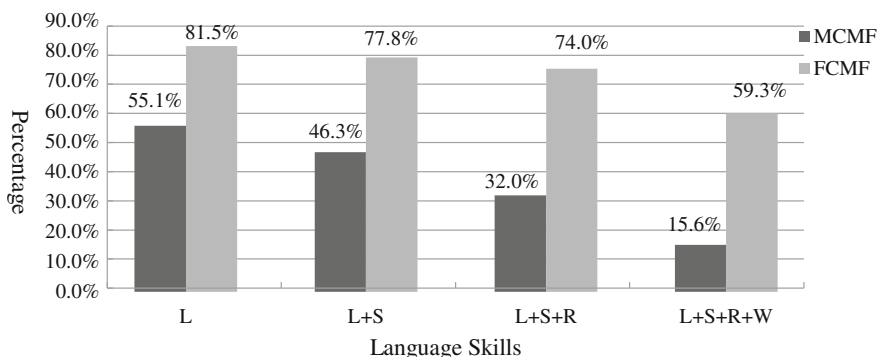


Fig. 2.1 The distribution of the CMF's four language skills in their non-Chinese L1s. *Note* L = listening; S = speaking; R = reading; W = writing

proficiency. A clear percentage differences were shown in all four language skills between our CMF with non-Chinese fathers and with non-Chinese mothers.

Figure 2.1 shows a comparison between how the bilingual FCMF and MCMF perceived their abilities in using their non-Chinese parents' L1s. From the proficiency levels of the four language skills, listening was the first and also the most developed skill, followed by speaking and reading, with writing as the least developed language skill for both groups of children. This developmental sequence corresponds to the natural steps of how the four skills are usually acquired by L1 speakers. An L1 user begins to listen to inputs made by adults from infancy, but will not begin to babble and form meaningful words, phrases, and sentences till much later. Reading development for L1 users may begin from reading picture story books together with adults, and writing usually does not take place till they enter school. Unlike some L2 learners who may learn how to read without the ability of carrying on a natural conversation in L2 or may be able to make a prepared speech without the ability to interact with others in a natural conversation, L1 users' developmental stage is rather unified. This group of CFM demonstrates a typical L1 developing process, except some never progressed to the final stage of their L1 development.

Figure 2.1 shows that a great amount of CMF could understand what their non-Chinese parents said (MCMF = 55.1 % vs. FCMF = 81.5 %), but fewer could carry on a conversation with their non-Chinese parents (MCMF = 46.3 % vs. FCMF = 77.8 %), and even fewer could read in their non-Chinese parents' L1s (MCMF = 32.0 % vs. FCMF = 74.0 %). Writing, a highly sophisticated skill even for L1 users, also seems the most difficult skill for the CFM. Comparing the proficiency levels of the two groups, the CMF with non-Chinese fathers appear to be more capable in using their fathers' L1s, than the CMF with non-Chinese mothers. Almost 59.3 % of the FCMF could reach the final stage of literacy, writing, but only 15.6 % of the MCMF could reach this final stage. Interestingly, very few homeroom teachers indicated that they had ever heard their CMF students use their non-Chinese L1s at school. In other words, most of the teachers were not aware that their students were actually bilingual.

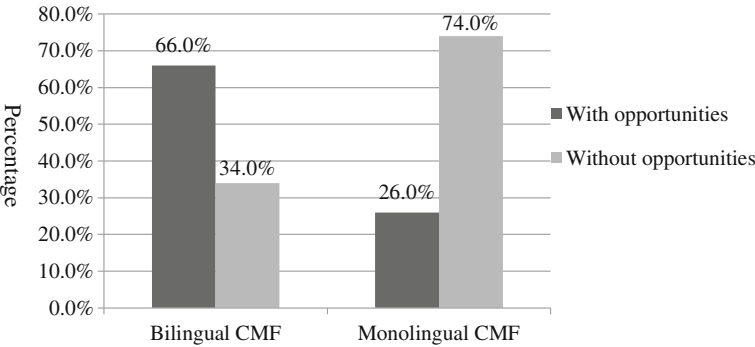


Fig. 2.2 CMF’s opportunities of using their non-Chinese parents’ L1 outside family contexts

We were curious how the bilingual CMF developed their non-Chinese L1s under the condition when external support was scarce from the school and society. About 66 % of the bilingual CMF said they had the opportunities of using their non-Chinese L1s outside the family. In contrast, only 26 % of the monolingual CMF claimed such opportunities, as displayed in Fig. 2.2. This indicates that with abundant opportunities outside their family contexts, CMF had a higher chance to develop their non-Chinese L1s. We further investigated via what channels the CMF could make use of their non-Chinese L1s. Other than speaking with their parents and siblings, the bilingual CMF said that they could use their non-Chinese L1s with: their relatives abroad (36 %) and the relatives in Taiwan (22 %), their parents’ friends (20 %), their friends of similar background (13 %), and their teachers (6 %, mostly English) (see Fig. 2.3). This social network allows the CMF to make use of, further develop, and refine their abilities in speaking their non-Chinese L1s.

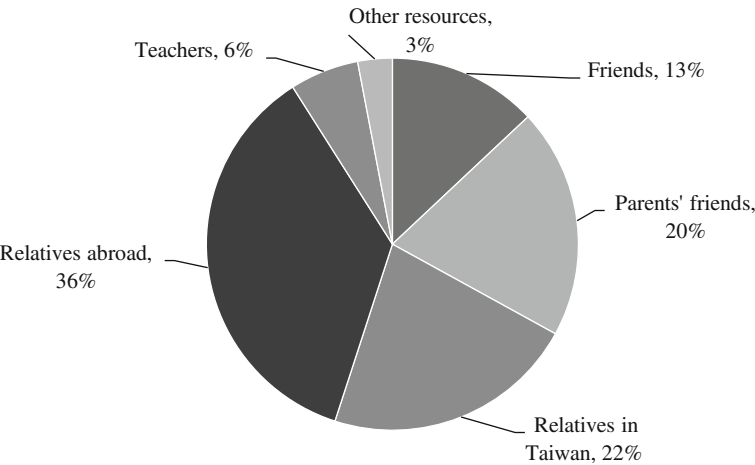


Fig. 2.3 Social network of communication for bilingual CMF outside their families

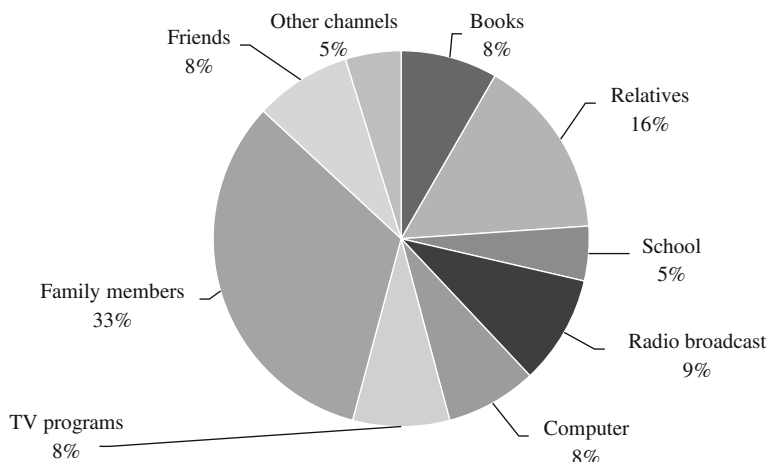


Fig. 2.4 Channels of linguistic inputs for bilingual CMF

The bilingual CMF also indicated that they could access inputs of their non-Chinese L1s from many different resources. Figure 2.4 shows that their parents and other family members played the primary role in providing resources and inputs in this aspect (34.2 %). In addition, they also received help from their relatives (16.3 %) or friends (8.7 %), and learned the non-Chinese L1s through radio programs (9.8 %), books (8.7 %), TV programs (8.7 %), and computer (8.7 %). The school played an insignificant role in their learning process (4.9 %). Overall, the parents not only taught the children themselves, but also created a supportive environment to facilitate multilingual development.

To further investigate the possible connection between the parents' education with their children's language development, we asked the homeroom teachers about the parents' educational levels. Normally, the homeroom teachers possess their students' profiles with detailed information about the students' family backgrounds, including the parents' education and professions. However, many students' profiles were incomplete. According to the teachers, a high percentage of parents, especially those of MCMF, did not fill in their education data in their children's profile. These parents were placed in the unknown category. Figures 2.5 and 2.6 display the educational levels of the MCMF's and FCMF's parents based on the children's bilingual statuses.

Figure 2.5 shows that, despite a great percentage of unknown data, especially for the mothers of the MCMF, the parents' educational levels fall largely in the categories of senior high school and below. However, the mothers of the bilingual MCMF seem to have higher education than those of the monolingual MCMF. About 28.1 % of the bilingual MCMF's mothers had senior high school or above education, while only 22 % of the monolingual MCMF's mother had received senior high school or above education. Among the parents with college and above level of education, the fathers of the bilingual MCMF (10.2 %) and the monolingual

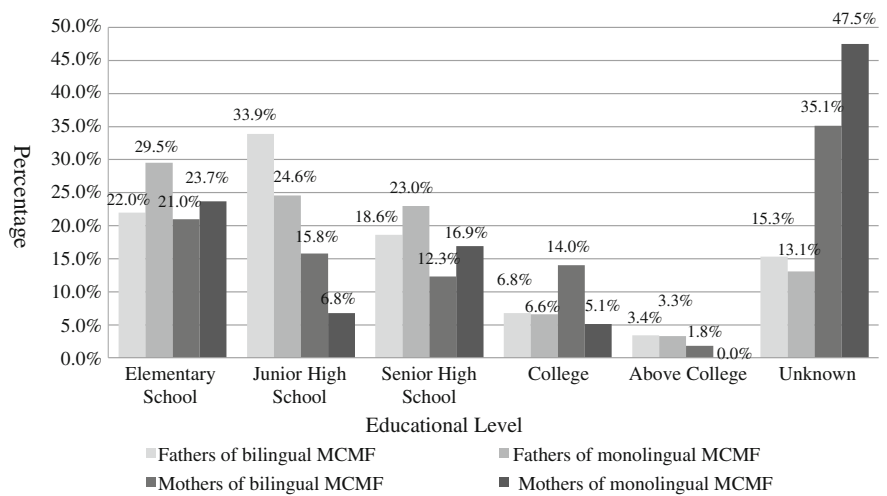


Fig. 2.5 Educational backgrounds of the MCMF’s parents

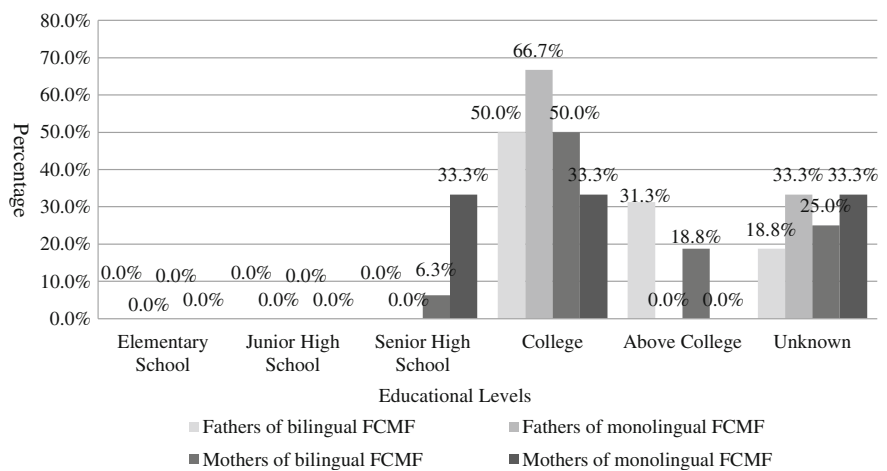


Fig. 2.6 Educational backgrounds of the FCMF’s parents

MCMF (9.9 %) possess a similar level of education. However, a higher percentage of the bilingual MCMF’s mothers (15.8 %) have received college and above education than those of the monolingual MCMF (5.1 %).

Figure 2.6 displays the educational levels of the FCMF’s parents. Despite the unknown figures, all the parents of the FCMF received education of senior high school or above. About 68.8 % of the bilingual FCMF’s mothers had college and above level education, while only 33.3 % of the monolingual FCMF’s mothers had college level education. Note that a considerable amount of parents of the bilingual

FCMF have even had graduate-level degrees (mother = 31.3 %; fathers = 18.8 %), while none of the monolingual FCMF's parents had graduate level education.

In general, the parents of FCMF are better educated than those of MCMF. Examining the relation between the parents' education with the children's bilingual development, it is found that the bilingual children's parents, especially mothers, tend to have higher education level. This tendency is even more salient with bilingual FCMF. Since the parents bear the responsibility of teaching the non-Chinese L1s to their children, the parents' education level is possibly a critical factor in their children's multilingual development.

2.4.2 The CMF's Multilingual Development and Their Academic Performance

The teachers were asked to evaluate the CMF's academic performance in the class. There were two goals for inviting such evaluation: to check in what places the CMF stood in their classes, and to see if there was any difference between the monolingual and bilingual CMF in terms of their academic performance. Considering the children studied in different schools at different grades, the teachers were not asked to provide the children's scores at school, but to compare the CMF with the whole class by their rank places in terms of overall academic performance, and performances in language arts and logic specifically.

Language arts, according to the MOE's general guidelines for the elementary school curriculum in Taiwan, include four subject areas: oral communication, Chinese, a *local language*, and English. Oral communication aims to help young children develop their skills in expressing opinions effectively, discussing issues in group, and presenting information publicly. Chinese is one of the primary subjects, and a difficult one, for elementary school students, especially for those in the lower grades. This is because young children need to devote a great effort to acquiring the complicated written system and memorizing the sounds and forms of up to 4,000 Chinese characters at the elementary school level (Ministry of Education 2001). In addition to Mandarin Chinese, the official language in Taiwan, elementary school children are also required to take a subject called *local language*. This subject was included in the curriculum in 2001 to reflect the fact that many dialects of Chinese and aboriginal languages are also spoken simultaneously with Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan. To encourage young children to learn their parents' native tongues, each school is free to offer one of the commonly spoken local languages/dialects, such as Taiwanese (also known as Southern Min or Hokkien), Hakka, and aboriginal languages, as a school subject. Taiwanese, the most widely spoken dialect, is the chosen local language by all 33 participating schools in Tainan. Thus, the local language discussed in this study refers to Taiwanese. The fourth subject in language arts is English. Elementary school children are required to take English as their primary foreign language in Taiwan. English was included in the curriculum of

elementary school since 2001. At the beginning, it was taught to fifth and sixth graders only, but gradually many cities and counties introduced this subject to lower grades. In Tainan city, English has been taught from second grade since 2004.

Logic, like language arts, is also a broad academic area at the elementary school level. According to the curriculum guidelines set by the Ministry of Education, children’s logic concept is developed through learning arithmetic and science. This study also asked the teachers to evaluate the children’s logical abilities based on their performances in these two subjects.

Figure 2.7 shows the relative standing places of the bilingual and monolingual CMF in their classes in terms of their overall academic performances. According to the teachers’ evaluation, 15.6 % of the monolingual CMF was ranked in the upper 10 % of the class, while 6.7 % of the bilingual ones reached this level. However, if adding up the numbers of students ranked in the upper 10, 20 and 30 % in the class, the bilingual CMF (44.1 %) performed similarly well as the monolingual CMF (42.2 %). Since over 40 % of the total number of CMF was ranked among the cumulative upper 30 % in the class, the CMF children’s academic performance was competitive with their counter peers with two Taiwanese parents.

In the aspects of language arts, the bilingual CMF seem to perform better than the monolingual ones (See Figs. 2.8, 2.9 and 2.10). Figure 2.8 shows the children’s performance on oral communication as a subject. The results indicate that about 56 % of the bilingual CMF and 47.7 % of the monolingual CMF were ranked among the cumulative upper 30 % in their oral communication classes.

Figure 2.9 shows the comparison of the bilingual and monolingual students’ performances on Chinese as a subject. The results indicate that about 53.3 % of the bilingual CMF and 49.2 % of the monolingual CMF were ranked among the cumulative upper 30 % in their Chinese classes.

Figure 2.10 shows how the two groups of children performed in local language as a subject. About 37.9 % of the bilingual and 33.9 % of the monolingual CMF were ranked among the cumulative upper 30 % in their Taiwanese classes. The

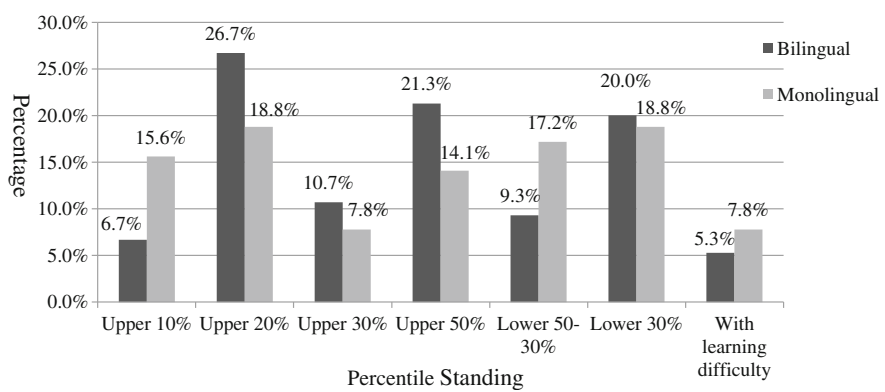


Fig. 2.7 Bilingual and monolingual CMF’s academic performances in their classes

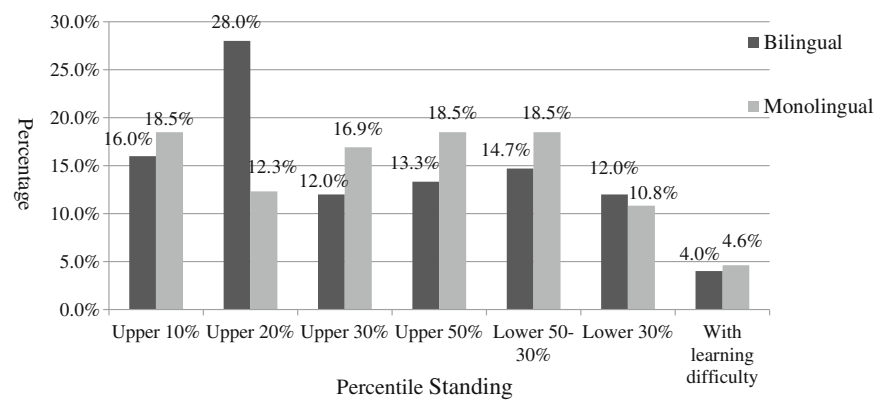


Fig. 2.8 Bilingual and monolingual CMF's performances in oral communication class

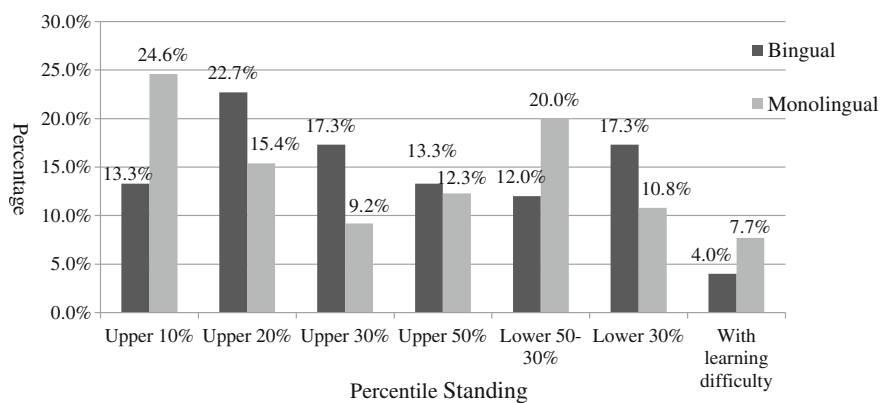


Fig. 2.9 Bilingual and monolingual CMF's performances in Chinese

lower percentages of both groups ranked in the cumulative upper 30 % in the class indicate that Taiwanese seems a more difficult subject than Chinese for the CMF. Since Taiwanese is a dialect of Chinese, it shares similar syntax with Mandarin Chinese. The class time is usually spent on teaching expressions, words and their pronunciations. To learn a dialect requires time, effort, and practice after class. Because of their multilingual family background, many CMF might lack supporting context to use this dialect at home, so might not have strong motivation to learn Taiwanese.

The CMF's performance in English, especially the bilingual ones', is more impressive than their performance in Taiwanese. Figure 2.11 shows that about 46.7 % of the bilingual CMF was ranked among the cumulative upper 30 % in the English class, while 32.4 % of the monolingual CMF achieved similar level. Many

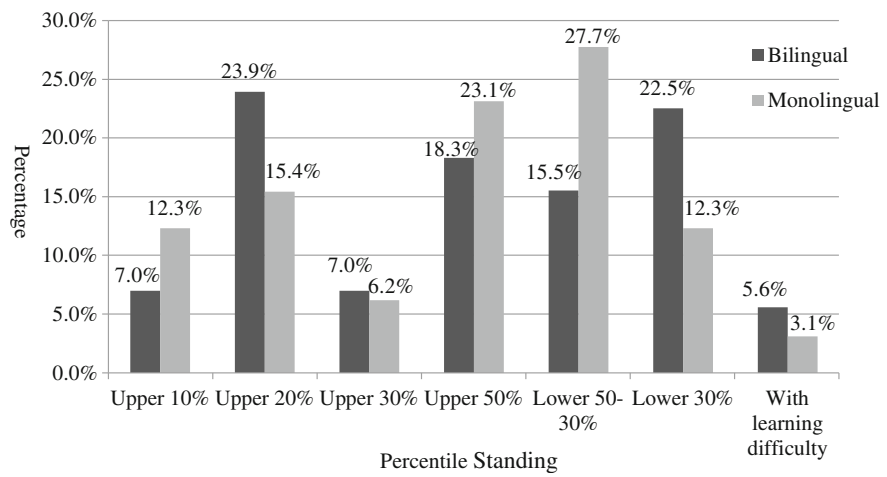


Fig. 2.10 Bilingual and monolingual CMF’s performances in Taiwanese

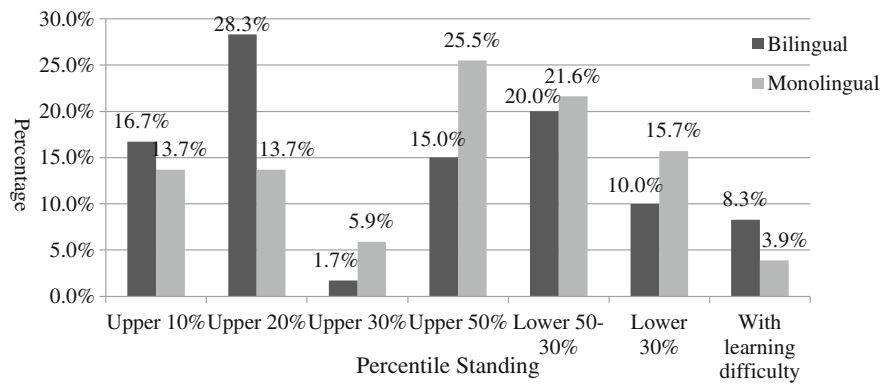


Fig. 2.11 Bilingual and monolingual CMF’s performances in English

of our CMF participants explained to us in the interviews that English was “more useful” than Taiwanese. Some bilingual CMF also pointed out that English was “easy” after they learned two languages.

Figure 2.12 shows the teachers’ evaluation about CMF students’ logical conceptuality in the class. The two groups of CMF perform rather differently in this area, which, interestingly, resembles to the difference in their performance in English. About 52 % of the bilingual CMF was ranked among the cumulative upper 30 %, while only 38.4 % of the monolingual reached the similar level. Foreign language learning is a process involving logical analysis of the target language. This process may be critical to learners who are learning two or more L1s simultaneously. The bilingual CMF’s better performance in English and their stronger ability in logical analysis are intuitive evidences to the benefit of learning two or more L1s.

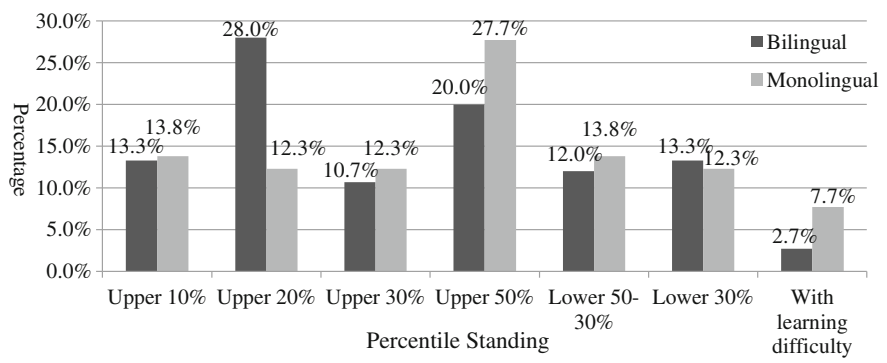


Fig. 2.12 Bilingual and monolingual CMF’s performances in logical conceptualization

2.4.3 The CMF’s Perceptions Toward Their Dual Identity

A person’s look, the language spoken, and the social behavior are often used for identifying whether that person belongs to a particular ethnic group in a society. This is especially true in Taiwan where 98 % of the population is formed by Han people and Mandarin Chinese is the only official language used in this society. Therefore, non-Taiwanese are easily identified and often addressed as *wài-gúo-rén* (literally outside-country-person, or, a foreigner). Children born to non-Chinese parents are called *huèn-xǐ-ér* (literally mixed-blood-child, or a mixed-blood). These two terms may not carry extremely negative connotations in the modern Taiwanese society, but surely indicate certain level of differentiation. Based on the interviews, CMF are rather sensitive to these two terms when they are addressed by strangers with these two terms in public. About 33.5 % of our CMF participants said they had been addressed as *wài-gúo-rén* or *huèn-xǐ-ér*. Some were often asked openly by strangers, “*Nǐ-shì wài-gúo-rén/huèn-xǐ-ér ma?*” (literally, “Are you a foreigner/mixed-blood?”) The rather high percentage of such experience indicates that the general public perceives the CMF as a special group in the society, though many of them cannot be differentiated solely by their appearances from an average child with two Taiwanese parents. Addressing the CMF as foreigners or mixed-blood publicly may mean no harm, but 45 % of the CMF with such experience said these terms brought negative feelings to them.

Interestingly, quite a few CMF participants in this study actually thought they were different from other Chinese children, despite the following three facts: (1) only 8 % of the teachers (12 out of 135) indicated that their CMF students “look” different from other Chinese children; (2) 76.6 % of our CMF participants (144 out of 188) indicated that they were born in Taiwan; and (3) all the CMF participants spoke very standard Mandarin Chinese, as evaluated by their teachers. About 32.6 % of the CMF participants (61 out of 188) said their spoken Mandarin was slightly or very different from their non-CMF peers. About 61.7 % of the total CMF participants (116 out of 188) said they looked slightly or very different from general

Taiwanese children. It appears the children's self-perception does not coincide with the adults' more objective view.

Finally, we asked the children which culture they identified to: their Chinese parents', non-Chinese parents', or both parents'. For the convenience of analysis, the CMF were first divided into two groups: those with non-Chinese fathers (i.e., FCMF) and with non-Chinese mothers (i.e., MCMF). Figure 2.13 shows that 43.4 % of MCMF and 53.8 % of FCMF indicated that they possessed a dual-identity. About 36.9 % of MCMF and 30.8 % of FCMF identified themselves toward their fathers' culture. Only 19.7 % of MCMF and 15.4 % of FCMF identified toward their mothers' culture. Considering that over 85.6 % of the CMF participants were born to non-Chinese mothers, the low percentage of identifying toward the maternal side may be influenced by the traditionally paternal society in Taiwan, and by the tendency that children easily identify toward the society where they live.

To understand the possible connection between the CMF's cultural identify and their multilingual ability, their answers to the same question were then analyzed regarding their bilingual or monolingual status. Figure 2.14 shows that 50 % of the bilingual and 37.8 % of the monolingual CMF possessed a dual-identity. About 29.4 % of the bilingual and 43.9 % of the monolingual CMF identified toward their fathers' cultures. Only 20.6 % of the bilingual and 18.3 % of the monolingual CMF identified toward their mothers' cultures. It is clear that being able to use both parents' L1s is a key factor for the CMF in developing a dual-identity. This finding indicates that the CMF, unlike the YI's development suggested by Liebkind (1995), need the proficiency of their both patents' languages in order to define their bicultural role in the society. Many YI, according to Liebkind (1995), may be fluent in both the home language and the societal language, but their cultural identity depends rather on the length of their residence in the host society and the age of their immigration to the host society; therefore, the bilingual proficiency does not play such a critical role in the YI's bicultural identify.

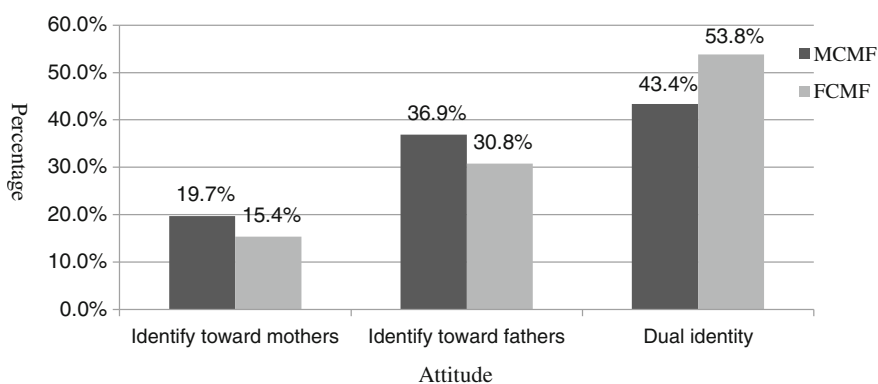


Fig. 2.13 Cultural identify of children with non-Chinese fathers and non-Chinese mothers

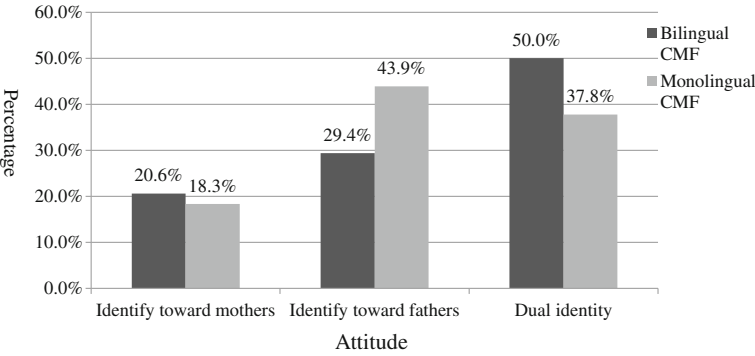


Fig. 2.14 Cultural identify of bilingual and monolingual CMF

2.5 Informal Interviews with Four Children and Their Teachers

The researcher conducted semi-constructed interviews with four children, two with non-Chinese mothers, and two with non-Chinese fathers, and their home room teachers at school after they completed the questionnaires. In addition, two parents who learned about this study also agreed to receive an interview from the researcher at the researcher’s office at their convenient time. The two MCMF were Da-ming (pseudo name), a 4th grade boy born to a Vietnamese mother, and Shin-yi (pseudo name), a 5th grade girl born to an Indonesian mother, while the FCMF were Jenny (pseudo name), a 5th grade girl born to a British father, and Oli (pseudo name), a 3rd grade boy born to a Hungarian father. The questions were related to the language learning processes, their exposures to the two cultures, their social networks, and their perceptions toward the two identities. The information provided by the children and the teachers helps to explain some findings from the surveys.

2.5.1 Perceptions of the Children

In terms of learning their non-Chinese parents’ L1s, the four children all indicated that their non-Chinese parents spoke to them in the non-Chinese L1s since they could remember. However, there were differences in degree and frequency of using the non-Chinese L1s between the MCMF and FCMF. The two MCMF said their mothers did not speak the non-Chinese L1s all the time, and they felt that their mothers used less the non-Chinese L1s as the children grew older. In fact, their mothers also wanted to learn Chinese together with the children and encouraged their children to use Chinese with them after the children entered the elementary school. On the contrary, the non-Chinese fathers seemed to insist on using their L1s

with the children all the time and emphasized the importance of speaking the fathers' L1s at home. Both FCMF claimed they were competent in all four language skills in their fathers' L1s and were very comfortable using both the mothers' and fathers' L1s. Oli mentioned the father bought many language learning materials and found him resources to listen to Hungarian stories on the Internet. The two MCMF claimed they could follow their mothers' conversation, but had difficulty responding in their mothers' L1s. Shin-yi mentioned her mother gave her some textbooks in Indonesian, and taught her how to read, but her mother was quite busy so the teaching did not go on for too long. In addition, Shin-yi's Taiwanese grandmother told her that it was "not useful" to learn Indonesian, so her mother rarely spoke Indonesian with her in front of other Taiwanese relatives.

The four children had different levels of exposure to their non-Chinese parents' cultures. The two FCMF mentioned the families visited the fathers' homelands almost every year, so they had the experiences of living in the fathers' countries, mixing with kids and relatives of their ages, and even going to school officially for certain period of time in their fathers' home countries. Jenny mentioned that the family planned to send her back to the UK to study in the high school, and she looked forward to such educational opportunity. Oli actually had studied 1 year in a Hungarian elementary school and was very eager to compare the differences between the Taiwanese and Hungarian school systems. Da-ming said his mother ran a small Vietnamese food store at home, and there were often Vietnamese customers eating in the store. Da-ming could roughly follow their conversations and would even talked to them sometimes. Da-ming also mentioned he visited the grandparents and other relatives in Vietnam once in a summer vacation, but never thought about living there. Shin-yi, unfortunately, had not have too much contact with Indonesian friends or relatives in her daily life, and had never met any relatives from her mother's side.

From the appearances, the two FCMF were easily identified with their multi-ethnic family backgrounds, but the two MCMF looked indifferent from Taiwanese children. Interestingly, the four children were all frequently addressed as mixed-blood by strangers. At school, they all thought their classmates were very friendly, but children from other grades or classes sometimes teased them. The two MCMF thought they were identified as mixed blood because people saw them together with their non-Chinese mothers. Though they did not think this term was particularly negative, they did not like to be labeled as "different" from other kids, either. The common strategy of the four children was "pretending not hearing anything" and "not responding to unfriendly questions." Oli pointed out that children often called him, "American" on the street, and said, "Hello! Are you American?" to him in English. He was quite annoyed by such questions. He had tried to explain he was Hungarian, but to his surprise people did not seem to know where Hungary was. After sometime, he just kept quiet or ignored strangers' curious questions. Jenny did not really care what others called her. She said, "Yes, I am mixed."

As to their academic performance at school, they had minor problems with Chinese *Zhuyin fuhou*, the phonetic system, while they were in the 1st grade. Da-ming said his parents could not help him, so his father decided to send him for extra

lessons after school. Shin-yi's mother signed her up for remedial classes at school, so she could ask the student teachers help her with her homework. The two FCMF said they received help from their Taiwanese mothers in the lower grades, but they both thought the teachers gave too much writing exercises, compared to their schooling experiences abroad. They both disliked writing Chinese characters and thought writing 10 times or 20 times a new character could not help them remember its shape. All four children had problems with learning Taiwanese in the local language class. Only Da-ming said he could speak some Taiwanese because he lived with his grandparents who spoke Taiwanese often. The other three children said they found this subject very difficult since nobody used it at their home environments.

Da-ming and Shin-yi thought they were primarily Taiwanese because they were born in Taiwan. Da-ming also said somehow he might also be Vietnamese, because he had Vietnamese grandparents and many Vietnamese relatives. Shin-yi was certain about her Taiwanese identity. She had very vague ideas about her connection with Indonesian culture or her mother's relatives there. Jenny and Oli, however, were very certain about their dual identity. They thought they owned both cultures, languages, and family connections.

2.5.2 Perceptions of the Teachers

The four home room teachers praised their CMF students as active and intelligent members in the classes. They all said the CMF brought positive effects to the class, especially in the aspect of multiculturalism. Da-ming's teacher said Da-ming's mother would prepare Vietnamese foods on the annual multicultural day of the school. This helped other children in the class to learn about Vietnamese customs and cultures. Shin-yi's teacher, though, had saw Shin-yi's mother picking her up a few times, the teacher had never talked to the mother. Shin-yi's daily learning logs were usually signed by her father, and sometimes by her grandmother. Thus, the assumption of Shin-yi's teacher was the mother could not read Chinese. According to the teacher, Shin-yi went along with other classmates well in the class, and had no particular problem with her school work. When the researcher told the teachers that the two children thought they were very different from other Taiwanese kids in their appearances, the two teachers were very surprised and said they would not agree with the children's views. They both thought nobody could tell their family backgrounds of the two children from their appearances. However, they also noticed that CMF were more sensitive to some unfriendly opinions about their mothers' ethnic backgrounds in the society, so they often brought up the topics about different customs and traditions of peoples in the world in the social study class.

The teachers of the two FCMF also shared similar views about having a CMF in the class created a great opportunity for other children to learn about the world. Oli's teacher mentioned a special example about how Oli and his brother helped to set up an international exchange project. Oli was sent back to Hungary to study for

1 year in his second grade, but his brother was studying in Taiwan during that year. The two classes in the two countries exchanged X'Mas cards in that year. Oli read out the cards written in Chinese for his Hungarian classmates, and Oli's brother did the same for his Taiwanese classes. This experience left a very deep impression for the children at both schools. Oli's teacher was actually very surprised when she learned from the researcher that Oli was annoyed by others' curiosity about his family background. The teacher thought he was quite friendly with any strangers approaching him with questions, but the teacher also said it seemed the general public showed unnecessary attention to children with multi-cultural background here in Taiwan. Jenny's teacher thought the society would get used to this phenomenon gradually since there would be more and more such families and children in Taiwan.

2.6 A Portrait of Taiwanese CMF

A general image of CMF regarding their linguistic, academic, and social development has emerged from this study. First, it is not true that a child born to a multilingual family must *naturally* develop the ability of using both parents' L1s, nor does the child automatically absorb both parents' cultures and thus possess a dual-identity. The parents' determination and competence in their own native cultures and languages, together with sufficient educational and cultural resources, are the critical factors in helping their children in multilingual development. The survey shows that the parents', especially the mothers', educational levels may have considerable influence on the children's multilingual development. Note that the mothers of CMF here do not refer to those non-Chinese mothers, but mothers in a more general aspect. The survey shows that the mothers of the bilingual MCMF and bilingual FCMF have higher educational levels than the mothers of the monolingual MCMF and FCMF. The survey also portrays an image of the bilingual CMF: they grew up in a positive environment for learning their non-Chinese parents' L1s, despite of scarce resources and official support from the society. Their supportive parents, relatives, and friends within the family circles together create this multilingual environment.

Second, being born to non-Chinese parents does not make the CMF a group of disadvantageous children in their schooling process, as some studies indicate (see Chap. 1). On the contrary, the CMF perform competitively with their counter peers with two Taiwanese parents. There is a certain percentage of CMF with learning disability, just like certain children with two Taiwanese parents could not learn normally. However, about 40 % of the CMF perform relatively well in subject matters of language arts and logic. Besides, learning more than one L1 along the child's grow-up process does not hinder their academic development. On the contrary, the multilingual experience may help the CMF learn languages, including Chinese, their native language, and English, a foreign language. The bilingual CMF also show outstanding oral communication ability, compared to the monolingual ones and even to the children with two Taiwanese parents. A strong connection is

found between the children's multilingual development and their ability in logical thinking, though this assumption requires further investigation.

Third, the CMF's self-perception is often different from how others look at them, and meanwhile the CMF are also sensitive to other people's judgment on them. For example, though the teachers indicated that most CMF, especially those with Asian parents, looked just like any average Taiwanese child, and spoke perfect Chinese, the CMF themselves believed that they were different from children with two Taiwanese parents in both appearances and accents. The society and the general public also seem to hold a rather distorted attitude toward the CMF by addressing them foreigners or mixed-blood.

Last but not least, the survey suggests that if a child cannot use the two parents' L1s fluently, this child will have limited access to one parent's culture, and thus have little opportunity of becoming a truly bicultural person. This process is different from Liebkind's view about identity search as a pure psychological development (Liebkind 1995). Although the CMF are born with two cultures, without the help of the linguistic representation of the two cultures, they will not have the key to the door of multicultural identity. The question now is whether the parents and the society think it is important for the CMF to become multicultural.

As the regional boundaries diminish in the 21st century, being multilingual will be the future norm among the world's population. However, to become a truly multicultural person is a much more difficult task for both the second language learners and the immigrants. A child born to a multilingual family, on the contrary, has the advantage of being multilingual with a multicultural identity, if the parents and the educational authority realize the rare opportunity this child possesses from his/her family background.

The survey results enable us to get closer to this growing group in the society, and meanwhile pose many new questions regarding the CMF's development. Other than conducting follow-up interviews with the CMF, their teachers, parents, and even school-mates, more careful analysis on their language development are needed. In the process of conducting this study, we realized that the great variety among these children may cause skewed results if we enforce purely statistical methods. Our experience suggests that we form meaningful questions from the results of a large scale study—as the present one continues—and then use the questions as the starting point for further analyses. Chapter 6 will approach the CMF's development from more linguistic aspects.

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