

UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC

Proposal for Independent Study for Graduate Students

Independent Study Course Information

Course Reference No.: _____ Dept. MAIR/SIS Course No.: MAIR 291 Units: 3

Title (as it should appear on your transcript): Language Acquisition of Multicultural Children

1. Justification for this Independent Study.

With their breakthrough research, scholars like David C. Pollock, Ruth E. VanReken and Barbara E. Schaetti, have brought to the foreground the plight of Third Culture Kids (TCK). The research topic of this independent study focuses on the next generation – the children of TCKs. Intercultural partnerships are common and when children are added to that partnership, the parents are faced with the issue of deciding what language or languages to speak at home; if only one language is primary, which parent's language is chosen, and so on. If the parents decide to teach their child more than one language, when is the optimal time in the child's life to introduce the second language? These and other questions are the focus of this independent study.

There is great potential in the international experience and we must ensure that the entire global family, including the children, get the skills and resources they need to reap the life-long benefits. I hope this research will help by exploring the joys and challenges of being multilingual. Adult TCKs have an opportunity to pass on their rich cultural heritage, open their children's minds to different perspectives and, consequently, teach them valuable intercultural communication skills needed in the 21st century.

2. Description of the Content of this Independent Study.

I will look at significant issues surrounding children's second and third language learning by completing an extensive literature review of research examining the following topics. In addition I will interview 10 people, all adult TCKs, from the military, diplomatic, corporate, and missionary sectors. Their children's age groups will include toddlers to teenagers. The topics I will explore in the literature review and interviews and which will be included in the lecture I will prepare for a conference presentation are:

1. Factors parents take into consideration when deciding whether to bring up their children as bilingual (or multilingual) include the languages of the parents, what language(s) do they use when communicating with each other, the parent's attitudes towards their own languages, the language(s) spoken by child care providers and the dominant language of the community in which they live.
2. How does being bilingual relate to being bicultural? Does it necessarily follow that learning a second or third language makes a child bicultural? Conversely, can one be multicultural without knowing the languages of the other cultures?
3. Is a second language learned in the same way as the first? What challenges are experienced by children who are learning second and third languages simultaneously?
4. The literature identifies four ages at which children become bilingual: Infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. What are the developmental issues that affect second language acquisition and proficiency?
5. What are the major identity challenges for bilingual and multilingual children? This issue may be tied to the cultural identities of the parents, and the ways in which they have negotiated their own bilingual/multilingual identities.

3. Educational Objectives of this Independent Study.

After completing this study I will be able to:

1. Assess the complexity of the issues faced by bilingual parents and their children.
2. Analyze the ways parents have managed their childrens' second language learning experiences.
3. Assess how 10 parents have handled these issues and compare and contrast their experiences with the literature on the topic.
4. Analyze the identity challenges faced by bilingual children due to their acquiring two or more languages.
5. Compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages of learning a second language at each of the four age groups (infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood).

5. **Design of the Study and Resources to be Used.** How are you going to accomplish your educational objectives? That is, what are you going to do, how are you going to do it, and what resources will you use? Please include a reading list (attach a separate sheet if necessary).

Activity 1. Read books and articles about a) children's second language acquisition, b) parents contemplating bilingualism, c) the connection between biculturalism and bilingualism, and d) identity challenges for bilingual children.

Activity 2: Interview 10 people in the military, diplomatic, corporate and missionary sectors, asking questions about how they raised their children to be bilingual, challenges they and their children face, and identity issues that surfaced as a result of their bilingualism. The interviews will be conducted face to face whenever possible or over the telephone. The interviewees are colleagues and acquaintances whom I have met through the MAIR program, SIETAR conferences, and language classes.

Activity 3: Synthesize the reading and interview data in a summary paper.

Activity 4: Develop case studies on second language acquisition issues for use by trainers and educators.

Activity 5: Develop a lecture and power point presentation to be presented at the Families in Global Transition conference.

Bibliography

Books:

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Spier, L., Hallowell, I. & Newman, S. (Eds.). (1983). *Language, culture, and personality: Essays in memory of Edward Sapir*. Conn: Greenwood Press.

Saunders, G. (1983). *Bilingual children: Guidance for the family*. NY: Multilingualism Matters.

Seely, N. H., & Howell Wasilewski, J. (1996). *Between cultures: Developing self-identity in a world of diversity*. Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Publishing Group.

Journal Articles:

Berry J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29, 697-712.

Fantini, A. E. (1995). Introduction – Language, culture, and world view: Exploring the nexus. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 19, 143-153.

Petitto, L. A. & Kovelman, I. (2003). The bilingual paradox: How signing-speaking bilingual children help us to resolve it and teach us about the brain's mechanisms underlying all language acquisition. *Learning Languages, Spring Vol.8, No.3, pp.5-18*.

Sparrow, L. M. (2000). Beyond multicultural man: Complexities of identity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 24, 173-201.

6. **Timeline.** What is your timeline for completing various tasks during this Independent Study course?

Activity 1: Reading – 55 hours

Activity 2: Write a summary paper based on the literature – 10 hours

Activity 3: Interview 10 parents and analyze the results - 40 hours

Activity 4: Synthesize the reading and the interview data – 20 hours

Activity 5: Compose a presentation speech and power point presentation – 10 hours

7. **Method of Evaluation.** How will you and the instructor know that you have accomplished your educational objectives? How will you both determine your success, e.g. a term paper, a report, an observed performance, or some other measures?

This independent study culminates in a one hour presentation at the Families in Global Transition conference. My instructor will receive a copy of my written lecture and accompanying power point presentation that I intend to use for my presentation at the conference. The lecture and presentation will demonstrate the accomplishment of my educational objectives, in addition to my summary paper.

7. Importance of this Independent Study. How will this Independent Study course contribute significantly to your educational and life goals?

I believe this Independent Study course will greatly influence the direction of my research as an interculturalist. I want to assist multicultural parents and their relatives with raising confident and inquisitive children. After I graduate from the Master's program, I would like to conduct research and write articles about the global lifestyle and how it affects children and young adults. I would like to work with relocation agencies to provide the best possible material to assist parents who are moving to another culture. Because of my personal experience as a TCK, and now my role as a mother of twin girls – who, at 10 months, already carry three passports - I am committed to the topic.

Signatures

Student _____	Date _____
Instructor _____	Date _____
Department Chair _____	Date _____
Dean _____	Date _____

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