SPEAKING IN TWO TONGUES: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY ON BILINGUAL EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

The Philippines comprises 7, 641 islands and with it, an approximately 170 languages spoken by almost 104 million Filipinos. Because of this, Filipinos are naturally bi/multilingual. Bilingualism is also a widely studied topic in the field of language education. In this study, however, a narrative inquiry is used to determine the advantages, disadvantages, strategies and views of the subject towards bilingualism. The subject's life narrative being bilingual was written based on the result of the interview and an unstructured questionnaire. From the data, codes were extracted and were discussed in the paper. The experience of the participant is a mirror of the linguistic experience of Filipinos where children acquire their mother tongue used in their communities. Then at a very young age, they also learn another language, almost always Filipino because this is what is used in Philippine schools. A conscious effort is then used to learn English, the second language of the country. Other languages learned are either for personal or practical reasons. It is indeed very difficult for the general public to get by without knowing English these days.

Keywords: *Bilingualism, lived experiences, narrative inquiry*

INTRODUCTION

A person is referred to as bilingual if he/she is fluent in two languages. The commonly held image of a bilingual person is of someone brought up in a culture where they are exposed to two languages from birth. It is not necessary to be equally fluent in both languages, but at least one should be very competent in the second one. More rarely, some people are trilingual, or even multilingual. There are some parts of the world where bilingualism is quite common. By convention, the language learned first is called L1 and the language learned second is called L2.

Bilingualism has become deeply attached to humans' existence in the globalization era. Baker (2011) explains that the bilingual population of the world is growing up as internationalism is spreading out in trade and travel, communications and mass media, immigration, and the interlinked global economy. Additionally, bilingualism occurs because of the interaction of different linguistic groups; the fluidity of the political and economic conditions in many countries; and the rapid changes in technology and telecommunication (Javier, 2007).

More than half of the world's population is bilingual. Edward (2006) states that everybody in the world is bilingual because no one in the world does not know at least a few words in other languages. However, Hornby (1977) and Gathercole (2010) define a bilingual person as someone who speaks and understands two languages. If a person speaks more than

two languages, he is called 'multilingual'. Similarly, a major characteristic of bilingual language use is that the two languages are used in different instances, with different people, and in different contexts (Sipra, 2007). Generally, being bilingual is needed in today's daily interactions. The term 'bilingualism' is typically used to describe the two languages of an individual, but it also can be used for both bilingual and multilingual situations. Because of this, there is no consensus on the definition of bilingualism.

In an early attempt to understand what is happening in bilingualism, Weinreich (1953) proposed that there are three types of bilingualism depending on how the two languages are learned. The ideal representation is called *compound bilingualism.* Here the labels in the two different languages are mutually connected to a common concept. This combined arrangement can only result when equal importance is given to each language in early childhood (Weinreich, 1953). In *coordinate bilingualism,* there are equivalent sets of word concept pairs, and the second language is connected to a new abstract structure, even though this intersects with the first. This condition develops when the learning situation for the second language is less idyllic than for the first. The situation where the second language develops later on after the first so that it is completely dependent on the first language is known as *subordinate bilingualism.* Nevertheless, it is not at all simple to recognize between these categories in practice, and it is not obvious that the series of acquisition is essential as Weinreich originally considered. A better distinction is to be made between ***simultaneous*** (L1 and L2 learned about the same time), *early **sequential*** (L1 learned first but L2 learned relatively early, in childhood), and *late* (in adolescence onwards) bilingualism (Bialystok, 2016). Early sequential bilinguals form the biggest group globally and the number is swelling, especially in countries with huge immigration rates. Nonetheless, bilinguals must have a process for manipulating attention to their two language systems to reach fluent performance in each language without interference from the other.

What can we learn from the study of bilingualism? First, it is clearly of practical importance to many societies. Second, psycholinguistics should inform us about the best way of teaching people a second language. Third, how do people represent the two languages? Do they have a mental dictionary for each one, or just separate entries for each word form but a shared conceptual representation? And how do people translate between the two languages? Finally, the study of bilingualism is a useful tool for examining other cognitive processes. There are many studies done about bilingualism. However, this study is different because it made use of narrative inquiry as a methodology.

This narrative investigated the experiences of a bilingual person. To arrive at a conclusion, the study poses the following corollary questions:
1. What are the advantages of being bilingual?
2. What are the disadvantages of being bilingual?
3. What are the different strategies in language learning the participant utilized?
4. What are the views of the participant about bilingualism based on his experiences?
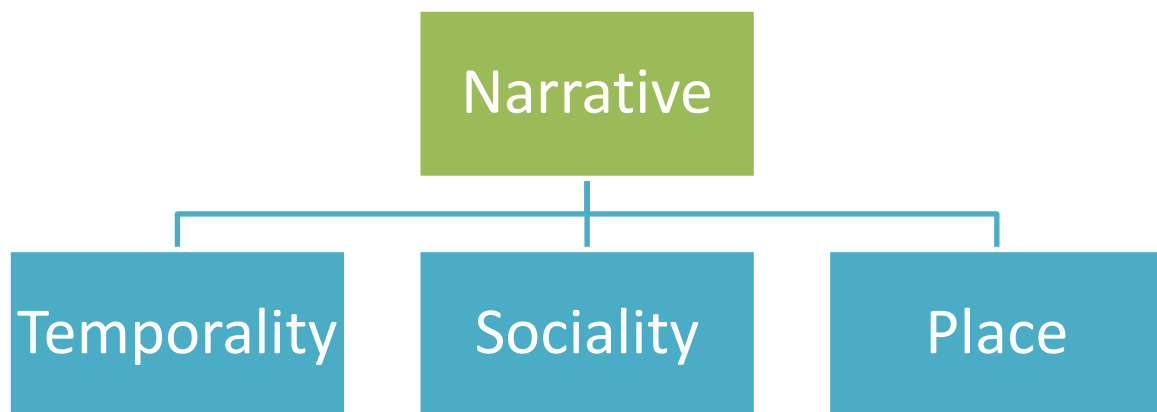
Narrative Inquiry

Figure 1. Commonplace Model (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000)

Narrative inquiry is a relatively new methodology used in social science research albeit we already use it to gain insights on our surroundings. As Clandinin and Rosiek put it:

> *"Human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).*

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience through "collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). Three commonplaces of narrative inquiry, temporality, sociality, and place, specify dimensions of an inquiry served as a framework in this study. Commonplaces are facets that need to be explored concurrently in using a narrative inquiry. Focusing experience through inquiry into all three commonplaces is what characterizes narrative inquiry from other research methodologies. Through concentrating on the commonplaces, researchers utilizing narrative inquiry can study the intricacy of the relational and social composition of people's lived experiences both within and outside of an inquiry and imagine the future possibilities of these lives.

In the first aspect *temporality*, events under study are always in temporal transition (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Leading attention temporally positions inquirers toward the past, present, and future of people, things, places, and events under study. The importance of temporality in narrative inquiry comes from philosophical views of experience where the "formal quality of experience through time is inherently narrative" (Crites, 1971). Drawing on philosophers such as Carr (1986) who shows that "we are composing and constantly revising our autobiographies as we go along", narrative inquirers need to attend to the temporality of their own and participants' lives. The second aspect, *sociality*, narrative inquirers attend to both personal conditions and, at the same time, to social conditions. By personal conditions, Connelly & Clandinin (2006) mean the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions" of the inquirer and participants. Social conditions refer to the environment where the conditions under which people's experiences and events are unfolding. This means that narrative inquirers cannot subtract themselves from the inquiry relationship. Lastly, *place,* or as Connelly and Clandinin (2006) define it: "the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the

inquiry and events take place". The key to this commonplace is recognizing that "all events take place someplace".

METHOD

"Narrative" is a term that has been pressed into the service of a multitude of ideas and theories (Barrett M.S. & Stauffer S.L., 2009). It is viewed variously as a "story," as a "mode of knowing" and constructing meaning, and, more recently, as a "method of inquiry (Creswell, 2013)." Possibly the most persistent portrayal and understanding of narrative is as "story," an account to self and others of people, places, and events and the relationships that hold between these elements. According to Creswell, the capacity to speak, and, through that medium, to construct a version of events, is a distinguishing human trait through which narratives, both "grand" or "master" and personal, have understood and communicated our knowledge and interpretations of our past, present worlds and can speculate about our future (Creswell, 2013).

Narrative can be seen as a way of structuring and organizing new experiences and knowledge by constructing knowledge and making it more learnable. Studying narrative is a way of studying the ways humans experience the world. Narrative inquiry is both a phenomenon and a method where people tell their stories; narrative researchers explain such experiences by collecting stories and writing narratives of them. Narrative inquiry provides an opportunity for the researcher access to the personal experiences of the participant, the storyteller. There are many possible starting places for narrative inquirers to analyze field texts, in this study though, the researcher started by asking the participant his stories in a one-on-one situation by responding to more or less structured interview questions and by engaging in conversation or dialogue.

There are a lot of extensive and comprehensive studies done on bilingualism that made use of a variety of methods. This study would be different because it focused on the lived experiences of the participant about being bilingual and how it affected his life. Enrique Gonzales, 20 years old, is the sole participant of the study interviewed by the researcher. He is a graduate of the degree Bachelor of Arts in Language and Literature at a prestigious university in the Philippines. He was chosen because the researcher felt the need to choose a participant who is conscious of the changes and effects of knowing two or more languages. That is why there is no better way than to choose a participant who majored in Languages to give us a glimpse of his life.

He has lived in a province in Northern Luzon for most of his life. He has a father who is a farmer and a mother who owns a tailoring shop. He is the middle of three children and, according to him, the least favorite one. He studied in a public school from elementary to high school. Then went to live in Baguio for four years to study. Right after graduating, he went back to his hometown to seek employment. He just landed a job in the same state university where the researcher is working.

He grew up misunderstood by the people around him. As a child, he was teased and laughed at for being 'effeminate' because he cried so much and preferred not to join any outdoor games. He has weak lungs that cause his asthma and sensitive skin that prevents him from playing outside for a long time. This caused a lot of bullying, especially concerning his sexual orientation. At a young age, he already felt how society molded, and warped his idea of what it means to be a man. He already felt the sexist stereotypes such as cars, balls, and guns would only be the toys he touched, not dolls. He also knew that boys do not cry and that they are not expected to help around the house.

Everything changed though when he got into college. When he was applying for admission to a university, he was expected to be an engineer, doctor, astronomer, mathematician, businessman, or lawyer. Instead, he applied for what he loved – Linguistics. According to him, for the first time, he realized he had taken into heart what was instilled in him when he was younger, which is 'manning up'.

He fell in love with languages when he was still a young boy. When he was 7 years old, they had a lot of Korean books in their home. This was the first time he learned a foreign language when he learned to count in Korean. Growing up, he also had friends who studied languages and they all seemed cool, especially when they talked about language like it is not the most natural thing in this world. He felt like they see languages as something so mundane yet so complicated to be studied. He also vividly remembered the scene from Daniel Padilla and Kathryn Bernardo's prime-time TV show "Princess and I" when the character of Kathryn heard a group of girls bullying her in Spanish and she understood them because she has a degree in European Languages so she put them in their places. This all sealed the deal. Last June 15, 2018, he graduated Cum laude from one of the most prestigious universities in the country in a course that he loved.

To gather the necessary story of the experiences of Mr. Enrique Gonzales, the researcher first asked him for permission can be the participant in this study. She also oriented him on the nature of the methodology of the research. Because it is a narrative inquiry in nature, questions might seem awkward at best, and intrusive at worst. He, however, understood, and because he shared the same love for languages with the researcher, he readily agreed. A series of informal interviews was done inside the faculty room and in chat messages on Facebook to be as exhaustive as possible.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Disadvantages
Proficiency Barriers

In Enrique's experience, he underwent some of the barriers of being bilingual. Most of these he had to go through in school. Prominent arguments against bilingualism are that learning two languages at once confuses children and lowers proficiency in both languages. Specifically concerning teaching English as a second language, it is suggested that a dual language approach interferes with the acquisition of the target language by accommodating an attitude by students that they can get by with their native language. According to him:

> "The challenge of being multilingual is generally characterized by how proficient I am in the languages that I know. For instance, it is harder, I guess, to be proficient in American Standard English when you are bilingual because of matters concerned with dialectal variation and language contact. I am used to code-switching, and being required to speak using only one language is a challenge. Although this phenomenon appeals to language being creative and generative, it is a disadvantage if proficiency is taken into consideration."

An area of consistent bilingual disadvantage is in receptive vocabulary: bilingual children score lower than monolinguals in each of the languages. This result has been replicated in almost every study that has compared monolingual and bilingual children in preschool and sometimes early school years (Oller & Eilers, 2002).

With two actives but competing systems capable of generating linguistic behavior, bilinguals need a mechanism to control attention to the required system and ignore the system not currently in use. Because the two representational systems are by necessity so similar in that they present alternative means of expressing some underlying concept that must, at some level, be the same (Kroll & de Groot, 1997), they are inherently conflicting.

There is no evidence that bilinguals are in any measurable sense more intelligent than monolinguals. In some areas, particularly linguistic ones, bilinguals are handicapped, possibly because of the cost of maintaining two representational systems (Michael & Gollan, 2005).

Translation Barriers

The particular research carried out by Monica Rivera Mindt and her team (2008), suggests that bilingualism is associated with lower language scores in all spoken languages, which is thought to be due to the executive function costs of inhibiting one or more languages and the frequency of use. When asking for similarities between words – which is meant to assess the ability to think in abstract terms – one needs also to take into account cultural differences. Cultural factors and expectations can also impact the assessment process, especially in non-Western cultures where similarities between abstractions may be based on different factors. In Enrique's case, he had problems with translations. A translation may compromise the standardization of the material and affect the interpretation of the results.

It was not the ability to speak two languages that interfered with his language development. What he found difficult when he was younger was that he spoke a different language that was used in school. He remembered struggling when he was little. He felt disadvantaged because he did not speak the language used in school. Other kids would just automatically understand the Filipino instructions of the teacher while he still had to translate before comprehension set in. However, this did not last this way because he soon learned how to speak in Filipino. There might be some initial delay in learning vocabulary items in one language, but this delay is soon made up, and of course, the total bilingual vocabulary of the children is much greater.

Decreased Mother Tongue Proficiency

Subtractive bilingualism occurs when learning an L2 interferes the L1 learning and consequently, the L1 is replaced by L1. In other words, subtractive bilingualism occurs when an individual learns the L2 to the determinant of L1. In this case, the competence and mastery of L1 diminishes, while the proficiency and mastery of the L2 (usually the dominant language) augments. This is exactly the case of Enrique. He said:

> *"After four years of living in Baguio, I noticed that my proficiency in Ilokano had changed. During my undergrad, I lived with my elder brother and cousins who are Filipino-speaking. So, I essentially had no one to talk to in Ilokano. In a way, Ilokano was relegated to being a mere token (just another additional information I put on forms) and not necessarily a social tool for me."*

Advantages
Connectivity

Bilingual and bi-literate individuals have the opportunity to participate in the global community in more ways, get information from more places, and learn more about people from other cultures. For Enrique, being bilingual helped him have a wider community, and more people to communicate with. It opened a lot of opportunities for him to gain a new set of friends. Bilingual children are also able to make new friends and create strong relationships using their second language—an important skill in our increasingly diverse society. He also believes that it enhanced his creativity, i.e. there are a lot more texts to take humor from especially if he is with friends who speak the same language that he does. There was one time, in his creative writing class, he named a character Tim McKee and it generated a lot of laughs. Code-switching in a social context is a tool for organizing conversational

exchange and as a way to make knowledge of the wider context in which conversation takes place relevant to an ongoing interaction (Nilep, 2006:17).

Gratitude

Having a major in Linguistics, Enrique felt a great appreciation for his being bilingual. He said: *"Now that I am older and took up a majorship in languages, I know that despite the perceived disadvantages, I appreciate what it is to know two or more languages. Because we know that language does not exist in a vacuum. It is a vehicle not just of culture and history but also thousands worth of knowledge. Knowing how to wield these languages makes me experience different lives than that of my mother tongue."*

Strategies

Exposure to Language

As the world becomes smaller while technology advances, being able to speak English fluently has become a prerequisite to a successful employment opportunity, especially in Asia where various commercial activities with North America have not been more frequent in the past decades. Globalization has given us more access to diverse resources not only financially, but also linguistically as well as educationally (Kung, 2013).

School readiness and success for children who are dual or multi-language learners is tied directly to mastery of their home language. Bilingual and multilingual children benefit academically from knowing more than one language in many ways.

Enrique's bilingualism is supported by his educational system, which makes English and Filipino compulsory instruction or teaching medium at schools. For Enrique, he had to learn Filipino and English because they are used and taught in school. He didn't want to spend his allowance paying for the five-peso fines in school, so he tried very hard to learn these languages. To help him do this, his parents bought him books in Filipino and English to expose him to the languages. According to him, the exposure to the language was really helpful. He also grew up loving to read storybooks. He remembered staying at the school library and reading these books. He loved reading about Filipino legends, and children's stories. This also helped him learn Filipino. He also learned English this way, through reading stories, and as he got older, fiction, and young adult books.

These findings confirmed the study of Mantasiah, et.al. (2019) that teaching English to children who are not native speakers of English will not make the child experience language disorders or delays in speaking. Introducing English to children early means training children to think complexly since childhood which will certainly have a positive impact on children's cognitive abilities (Mantasiah, Yusri, Jufri, 2019).

Internal Motivation

Gardner and Lambert (1972) established the socio-psychological model of bilingualism. There are two kinds of motivation: the first kind is integrative motivation which refers to learners' willingness to learn the language to take part in the community that speaks that language. The second kind is instrumental motivation, which deals with learners' desire to acquire foreign language proficiency for practical purposes. These motivations were in play when he tried to study Spanish and Paranan.

> *"I also studied Spanish during my college years because it is required; I was not very motivated to learn it. Apart from the acknowledgment that knowing Spanish can make me look "cool", I didn't see other utility in having it, so I am not very proficient in it. What I just remember was the words Dora the Explorer often used. On the other hand, I had to learn Paranan for my thesis, but the lack*

of comprehensible input became the challenge that hindered my learning. I didn't have anyone to talk to, to practice it with. I know some words, and can create simple sentences. But I imagine if given a chance to interact with a Paranan, my usage of the language would sound off given that I just learned these through studying and not through interaction."

Views
Change in Language Use
In the different types of bilingualism, Enrique can be considered a successive early bilingual. Successive early bilingualism occurs in situations when a child has already partially acquired an L1 (first language) and then learns an L2 (second language) early in childhood; an example can be when a child moves to another place where the dominant language is not his native language. This usually results in the production of a strong bilingualism, but the child needs time to learn the L2. This could be seen in his experience when he was young. When he and his elder brother were still young, they grew up speaking Ilokano only. Therefore, the first couple of years of grade school were very challenging for them because he had a hard time with Filipino. Yet, when his younger brother was born (he was in 6th grade then), he noticed that his family became essentially bilingual (Ilokano-Filipino). This may have come from the fact that he and his elder brother are already exposed to Filipino and because most of their days are spent at school, they became more proficient. So, when their baby brother came, they may have talked to him more in Filipino than in Ilokano. Now, Filipino is the mother tongue of his younger brother. They learned Filipino easily because they learned it when they were young.

Natural Feeling
He also felt a slight change in the aura/feeling whenever he spoke different languages. For instance, code-switching between Filipino and English is his normal self, a neutral feeling. However, speaking in Filipino only or in English only entails a sense of confidence and formality. He feels that speaking entirely in Filipino or English would entail a conscious approach and would only be done in rigid, or formal instances.

This coincides with the findings of Asada (2013) which showed that L2 speakers may discover and develop a new personality or identity through self-expression in another language. The learning environment and L2 proficiency were ostensibly key factors affecting the participants' recognition of their bilingual identity and bilingualism (Asada, 2013).

Filipino Identity
For Enrique, being bilingual is part of being a Filipino. He described it almost poetically when he said,

"I guess the essence of a Filipino is being someone characterized by the "multi." It is the recognition of the multiplicities of culture and language that constitutes my identity. Therefore, I believe that bilingualism is an essential aspect of the Filipino identity and experience. After all, they say there is no such thing as a "pure-blooded Filipino" because as seen in history, the Philippines is raped by several colonizers from different foreign countries. We are an amalgamation of cultures. Not only externally, but also internally. The Philippines is an archipelago with over 170 documented languages. Being bilingual/multilingual is natural for Filipinos."

Equality

Being bilingual is also seen as fostering respect for the culture of non-native English-speaking students. He believed that being bilingual matters because this notion fosters being culturally- and linguistically-informed. For him, it acknowledges and treats all the languages in the Philippines (and the world) equally. He also perceived that being bilingual is economically advantageous because in this world of inter-connectedness, being bilingual is an economic advantage. After all, translation work is one of the most, if not the most, lucrative works in language studies.

Change in the Linguistic Landscape

All in all, he felt that his linguistic background changed because of the linguistic landscape around him. Despite Ilokano being his mother tongue, he felt that he already had a decreased proficiency in the language. He grew up in a school following a bilingual education policy program, hence his proficiency in Filipino and English increased. His stay in Baguio did not help in him using Ilokano again because even though Baguio is largely an Ilocano community, it has been experiencing a changing linguistic landscape. This is because the majority of the people who stay in Baguio are students who are also lowlanders and/or foreigners. The place attracts foreigners because of the cool weather. Baguio is also a go-to destination here in the Philippines. As years went by, the languages there became a mixture of different languages. One perfect example is their dilemma of deciding what mother tongue to use in their MTBMLE subject because their students range from Ilokano to Ibaloi to Kankana-ey to Japanese, to Pangasinense to Korean. To cut the narrative short, his Ilokano was not that good anymore because of the different linguistic factors that came into play.

CONCLUSION

Based on the participant's experiences, he experiences the advantages and disadvantages of being bilingual. He also has different learning strategies and some views about the status of bilingualism in the country. The advantages include connecting with other people and the feeling of gratitude while the disadvantages are proficiency and translation barriers as well as decreased mother tongue proficiency. The learning strategies are exposure to language and internal motivation. His views about being bilingual are coded into the following themes: a change in language use, natural feeling, Filipino identity, equality, and change in the linguistic landscape. As the current study represents only a small step, it is not possible to reach any all-encompassing conclusions; therefore, a more detailed and systematic investigation of the complex and challenging language scenario in the Philippines is needed to bring to light the issues and effects of bilingualism.

With the different languages of the participant, he is engaged in shaping and being shaped by his surrounding world. The experience of the participant is a mirror of the linguistic experience of Filipinos. Children acquire their mother tongue used in their communities. Then at a very young age, they also learn another language, almost always Filipino because this is what is used in Philippine schools. A conscious effort is then used to learn English, the second language of the country. Other languages learned are either for personal or practical reasons. A Filipino will always know more than two languages. We experience its opportunities and deal with the drawbacks. There are advantages and disadvantages of being bilingual. However, being bilingual is already a part of what it is to be a Filipino.

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