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An Internationally Adopted Child's Transition: A family story

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Abstract

The goal of this study was to contribute to the literature on international adoption by conducting a case study with one adoptive family. Data was collected using a semi-structured, in-depth interview that was audio recorded and transcribed word-for-word. The interview questions asked about family configuration, language background and use, adoptive family decisions about cultural inclusiveness, and the transition from home to school. The analysis was member-checked following coding for the themes that emerged.   Results indicated that lingering differences from reduced exposure to language in the first year of life took the form of subtle language differences that continued through the early school years. These were offset through family and community supports that facilitated successful transition to school. The culmination of the study is a family's story that may help others appreciate the joys and challenges of international adoption.

An Internationally Adopted Child's Transition: A family story

Families with internationally adopted children are becoming more common and prominent in America today. These internationally adopted (IA) children possess a wildly different linguistic background than those who have only been exposed to their native language. In fact, many researchers associate IA children's communicative experience to that of bilinguals. There are similarities and differences between the two populations that are worth looking into. Although it is assumed that the traditional language approach is monolinguistic, there are more bilingual than monolingual people in the world (Romaine, 1995). Bilingualism was once frowned upon because some saw it as a blatant aversion to complete societal immersion. However, in today's society, bilingualism is viewed more as a prized standard that one can educate oneself to. College students across the country are majoring and minoring in foreign languages in order to seem more marketable to employers in a linguistically diverse country. And international adoption numbers are increasing which allows even more variety of cultural experiences and languages to come to the U.S.

It is common knowledge that adults have more difficulty learning a language than children do, often spending years and dollars to achieve fluency. In contrast, young children exposed to two languages with no formal instruction often acquire such proficiency with little or no assistance. Research suggests that the language environment of the home as well as the community may contribute to this. Learning settings from daycare to preschool to K-12 schools are a specific part of

communities, and many of these are English only. The language of the home may not be the language of learning within these settings. Therefore, more information is needed about the ways that parents raise children from or living in different language communities.

This purpose of this pilot study is to investigate how parents handle raising internationally adopted children and how their child's first experience of monolingual schooling. Knowledge gained from this research may add perspective to long standing questions about the complexity of language development in internationally adopted children and the feasibility of considering the possibility that IA children's developmental differences can affect their academic and pragmatic success. This research could eventually lead to a different way of regarding international adoption in early childhood and consequently in schools.

Review of the Literature

This review of the literature provides definitions of language, discusses language acquisition as an aspect of development, linguistic properties of bilingual development and combines all three of these elements to help understand language development in internationally adopted children. This is followed by a brief summary and the specific questions of the study.

Language

Language could possibly be considered the most incredible aspect of the human species and is expressed through speech. Language in its entirety is far too complex and arbitrary to understand (Trask, 2004). Therefore, linguists break it into three major functional groups: form, content and use. Within these functional

groups are the basic components of language. Form encompasses syntax, morphology and phonology. Content implicates the semantics of language. Use is another word for pragmatics, or how we use language in order to communicate. In order to completely comprehend language, it is important to discern these subcategories from one another.

Phonology. "Phonology is the aspect of language concerned with the rules governing the structures, distribution and sequencing of speech sounds and the shape of syllables" (Owens, 2012). There are approximately 43 phonemes in the English language, 24 in the Spanish language and 22 in the Japanese language. Phonemes are also influenced by dialectical variations, which can amount to an innumerable number of phonemes in any given language. Phonemes are the smallest linguistic unit of sound that can signal a difference in meaning (Owens, 2012). The reason that the word *dog* and *log* are different is all because of one phonetic variation. Phonology includes sequencing for sound modifications, distributional rules and phonological organization.

Morphology. "A morpheme is the smallest grammatical unit and is indivisible without violating the meaning or producing meaningless units" (Owens, 2012). The letter "D" by itself has no meaning and therefore is not a morpheme, but rather a phoneme. An example of a morpheme would be "toy", because "t" and "oy" by themselves carry no grammatical meaning, but put together make a word. There are free morphemes, bound morphemes, derivational morphemes and inflectional morphemes. Morphology is under the functional category *form* because putting all

these morphemes together forms words that are necessary in order to communicate in any given language.

Semantics. "Semantics is the system of rules governing the meaning or content of words and word combinations "(Owens 2012). The English language is arbitrary. The words or symbols used represent not reality itself but our ideas or concepts about reality (Owens, 2012). The word "toy" does not itself look like a toy, but it still means something we play with. Enhancement of concepts and perceptions of words is achieved by conversing with others who speak the same language.

Syntax. This component of the functional category of form is in regards to sentences. The rules of syntax govern the structure of a sentence (Owens, 2012). More specifically, syntax includes the relationship between words, sentence organization and word-phrase-clause order. In any given sentence, the syntactical structure either is acceptable or not. The main elements of a sentence are noun and verb phrases (Owens, 2012). They are the mandatory ingredients for a sentence to be able to stand on its own. However, the degree of syntactical necessity varies between languages. Some languages (English for example) are very dependent on the syntactical structure of sentences, because without it our communication would not make any sense. There are other languages (Australian aboriginal) that are relatively free (Owens, 2012). Another aspect of syntax that fluctuates between languages is the order between the subject, the verb, and the object. In English, the basic SVO (subject-verb-object) form is used. But in Japanese and Korean, the SOV (subject- object-verb) form is used. Using the correct organization for the given language will allow the speaker to make sense and sound less awkward.

Pragmatics. According to some linguists, pragmatics is the all-encompassing element of language for which all the other components have to satisfy. That is because pragmatics is measured as a means of communicating effectively. It is concerned with the way language is used rather than the way it is structured (Owens, 2012). If the other components were askew, then the speaker would be pragmatically ineffective. Therefore, the functionalist believes that pragmatics is the overall most important principle of language. Pragmatics includes communication intensions, conversational rules and types of discourse (Owens, 2012).

All the elements of language are related and consistently influence each other. Language is heavily influenced by context (Owens, 2012). Context is only garnered by communication. And in order for communication to be effective, all the aspects of language are necessary. Language as a social tool is very complex and is difficult to acquire, but is paramount for everyday life.

Acquisition

Language acquisition is a long-standing mystery with theories that have changed from ancient to modern day times. While it is known that the process begins at birth and first mastery of speech occurring around one year of age (made obvious by a child producing their first word), the cognitive processes behind development is still up for debate. Studies show multiple different theories of language acquisition used including the behavioral method, the psycholinguistic method and the sociolinguistic method. Each of these is relevant in todays' society and provides logical reasoning behind their findings. However, there is no universally agreed upon theory that explains how children learn language. Isabelle

Rapin of Albert Einstein College of Medicine claims "human infants acquire the ability to speak and understand speech over the first three years of life, seemingly effortlessly and without the need for systematic instruction even though they are exposed to less than consistent exemplars of their mother's tongue" (Rapin, 1996). This statement is likely to be agreed upon amongst researchers even as they theorize differently about language acquisition.

In order to be able to use a language properly, one must know the words that the language consists of, what they mean and how they are pronounced (Culicover 2010). As adults learning a new language, the complexity of this task is clear and usually requires some kind of formal instruction. However, children are not formally instructed on the aspects of language and yet they have mastered the essentials and can use these to build knowledge before they begin school (Rapin, 1996). This rapid emergence of language is cited as evidence by Culicover (2010) that the idea that children learn language strictly based on parental corrections of mistakes is a myth. Language is something that is much more complex than that. Many experts believe that human beings are born with innate abilities for extracting patterns from the world around them, associating those patterns with one another and generalizing from particular instances to general rules (Jimenez, 2009). Basically, there are implicit capacities that are present at birth that make humans extraordinarily adapt at learning a first language. In addition, parental presence fosters that learning process. Parents or guardians should be conversing with their infants even though the children cannot understand them or respond (Owens, 2012). In fact, a lot of mothers read or sing to their fetuses because the ear begins actively listening at the 24th

week (Culicover, 2010). This continuous communication would allow children to subconsciously pick up the patterns of speech and should more than likely lead to a first word being produced around one year of age. This ties into the beliefs of some linguists who claim there is a critical period for language learning in which the parts of the brain necessary for language acquisition remain active (Dorow, 2006). Other scientists believe that the capacity to learn complex skills is naturally and accurately stronger during childhood and begins to fade as one ages (Culicover, 2010).

Bilingualism

It is safe to assume that because there is no consensus on how a single language is acquired and that there is no definite theory on how bilingual children acquire language. In the United States, approximately 20% of the population is bilingual (Owens, 2012). With the prevalence of immigration, refugees and international adoption on the rise, it is more than likely that that percentage will increase. In addition, college students are trying to make themselves more marketable by learning a second language to appeal to a larger client base. However, many of these students are struggling with learning a second language at their age. It is universally understood that children learn two languages much easier than adults (Dorow, 2006). Why is that? Adults are more formally educated and more knowledgeable than children, yet struggle with learning a new language. Culicover and Hume (2010) attempt to explain this. They believe that most people have an explicit understanding of how language works instead of an intuitive understanding. An explicit understanding means that one is not able to recognize or explain aspects of language, but can use them. An intuitive understanding is that one will recognize all the aspects of another language when illustrated using the native language. If one does not

understand the components behind their native language, they cannot possibly understand the components behind another language. Children have an intuitive understanding of language, which makes learning a second language that much easier them than for adults (Culicover, 2012).

Children that are raised to successfully demonstrate mastery of two or more languages and be considered bilingual more than likely had constant exposure to the two separate languages. According to the 2011 census, over 60 million people spoke another language than English at home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Out of these millions of homes that speak two languages at home, there are at least thousands that are raising children in these homes. It would be a natural estimation that these children all exposed to two languages, and possibly bilingual. However, many of these students are not proficient in either language. They use "code- switching" which is switching between the two languages when they don't know how to complete their thought in the initially used language or they. This code switching allows for these children to learn which properties of language can be used in both languages and which ones are specified. For example: in Spanish, all nouns have a feminine or masculine form. In English however, there is no such phenomenon. This is a property of language that is not universal and the children that learn both languages clearly know this. However, if a child has never learned another language, they are more prone to think that nouns are the same universally. This could lead to a monolinguistic child never truly understanding their language in its entirety because it is so second nature to them. They could have no metalinguistic awareness because they have never learned how another language works. It has been

hypothesized by many experts that because bilingual children are more aware of the properties of language this allows a much more intentional switch between their languages making "code-switching" easier than speaking in a monolingual fashion.

Bosca and Hulea (2015) of the University of Petrosani in Romania conducted an interesting study titled "Psychological and Educational Implications of Bilinguality". The study investigates the relationship between cognitive development and bilingualism based on analyzing children from Hungary. The experimental group included children who spoke both Serbian and Hungarian at home and a control group that included children who only spoke Hungarian. They concluded that the bilingual children demonstrated a more sophisticated phonemic awareness than the monolingual children (Bosca & Hulea, 2015). The same researchers conducted another study with Serbian pre-school age children and divided them into three separate groups. The first group attended a French teaching kindergarten. The second group had been learning English for two to three hours weekly. The third group did not learn any foreign language at all. The children in the first two groups demonstrated better results in tests involving the identification of word's syllables and understood that words are arbitrary and do not directly connect to their referents. Lastly, Bialystok (2010) of York University conducted a study in which she asked monolingual and bilingual students to decide whether the sentences presented to them were grammatically correct or not. She presented them with a mix of proper and improper grammatical sentences but all were semantically plausible. The results indicated that the bilingual students were

more focused on the grammar issues in the sentences than the monolingual student (Bialystok, 2010). These results stand as evidence to the idea that bilingualism is fundamentally different from monolingualism, and that this impacts the way bilingual children understand, use, and learn language. Monolingual students understand language as second nature; they use it in one facet and learn it without any metalinguistic influence. Bilinguals because they are exposed to two different languages understand the properties of language and as a result, use those properties in both universal or individualized ways (Bosca, 2015). They use language in a variety of different ways, for example when code-switching. Similarly to monolinguals there is typically no formal instructing of a bilingual child to learn two languages, but unlike monolinguistic children, bilingual children associate both languages with the metalinguistic characteristics that many monolinguistic children entirely neglect (Bialystok, 2010).

Children do not know what to expect when entering in the school system, but their parents do. Therefore, preparation for school falls under the parental responsibilities instead of the child's. There are many aspects of school that are new and difficult for even a monolingual child. Being away from their family, remaining in a new environment for an extended period of time, and learning alongside peers. However, these monolingual students are typically more than prepared to not only be administered instruction but also understand this instruction and learn accordingly in their native language. Since their native language happens to be the same one that is being used by their teacher, making learning less of a hurdle. For bilingual students, also known as culturally and linguistically different (CLD), this may not be the case. Bilinguals have two languages that are referred to as L1 (the

native language) and L2. Many bilingual students' L1 is not English. Therefore, on top of all the other hurdles accompany going to school for the first time, learning could be potentially difficult if their L2 is not strong. This is when the parental duties are necessary. In order to maximize the student's academic potential, the student needs to be proficient in the language in which they are being instructed. If the student does not understand the teacher, it would be beyond difficult to learn. Therefore, at home parents of bilingual students need to strengthen the child's abilities in L2 and possibly use L2 for a period of time before school starts so the child is not blindsided when they arrive to class the first day and realize that nobody is speaking their L1. That could be jarring for a child and also create a negative attitude towards the school experience. Another issue arises when some parents buy into the limited capacity phenomenon (Dixon, 2012). Meaning, that they believe their child can only be proficient in one language, which is not true. While one language will always be dominant and used more often, high proficiency in both languages is attainable. There are four key factors that contribute to the development of both languages: status of languages involved, socioeconomic status of the family, the amount of input in each language, and which language the mother uses (Dixon, 2012). All of these components together affect how proficient the child is in not only L2 but L1 as well. A proficient L2 will never be attained if L1 is insufficient. L1 serves as a foundation for L2. Therefore, the child needs to be speaking one language proficiently in order for the other language to become proficient. That is another parental responsibility.

The teacher has a part in this preparation as well. Teachers are aware of which students in their classrooms are culturally and linguistically different so that they can cater to these students more specifically. There are many techniques that teachers can use in order to foster the learning process in a bilingual student. Some of these techniques include acknowledging and encouraging trans-language practices, creating & transforming language identity texts, etc. (Espana, 2016). Many teachers are even part of an online professional learning community where successful techniques are shared and explained. In addition to this, teachers and the parents create a team to help aid the child in this transition and work to hopefully develop a plan on how to make the child the most successful.

Internationally Adopted Children and Language Development

International adoption numbers have increased considerably since 1991 (U.S. Department of State, 2006). Children adopted from China represent the biggest group of newly adopted children in the U.S. (Price, 2012). The majority of adoptions take place when the children are between 0-3 years of age. Since this is a young age, these children will be transitioning into school with a potentially interesting linguistic background. As previously stated, language development is characterized by predictable shifts in the words children produce and the increasing complexity of their utterances. But for an adopted child who was inadequately subjected to one language before being exposed to another, this development could be affected and therefore create a different linguistic background than monolingual children.

What is Adoption? The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption defines adoption as the legal transfer of parental rights from biological parents to new

parents (Dave Thomas Foundation, 2016). Not only are parental rights transferred, but also emotional, social, financial, legal and familial responsibilities are passed on as well. This study is focused heavily on Chinese adoption. There were 261,728 total international adoptions in the 2014-2015 fiscal year (US Department of State, 2015). According to Johanna Price in 2012, Children adopted from China currently represent the largest group of newly internationally adopted children in the U.S. (Price, 2012). The number of Chinese international adoptions in the US has risen from 7000 in 1991 to nearly 23,000 in 2005 (US Department of State, 2006). Families who internationally adopt face a number of problems when they return to the United States. The transition is not as easy as it may seem, especially from China, where the culture is very perpendicular to American traditions.

There is a lengthy list of requirements that the Chinese government has placed on adoptions out of their country. Some of these include: one of the prospective adoptive parents (PAPs) must travel to China to sign required paperwork, both PAPs must be at least 30 years old, only married heterosexual couples or single women may legally adopt from China, the net worth of the PAPs must be at least $80,000, and each PAP must complete a full background check and physical exam (Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2016). If the PAPs meet all of these criteria and all the required paperwork is filled out and approved, they are then legally eligible to adopt a child from China. However, the children eligible for adoption also have criteria to meet as well. PAPs may only adopt Chinese children who are either lawfully relinquished or abandoned by both of their biological parents and are under the age of 13 (Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2016). Only after all

of these criteria are met is it possible for the adoption process to begin. The process of matching a PAP couple and a Chinese child has been recently recorded as to take up to 9 years (BCA, 2016). Unfortunately, the hardships for adoptive families do not end when the adoptive child is brought home.

   Factors that Influence Language Development in IA Children The linguistic transition between cultures is something that affects many IA families. Perhaps the most influential thing that affects the ease of transition and development is correlated to age of adoption, or length of time institutionalized (Rakhlin, 2015). According to the US Department of State, out of the 261,728 total adoptions that occurred between 2014-2015, the majority of these included children under the age of 1 (95,398) followed by children between ages 1 and 2 (94,008) (US Department of State, 2015). For the 71,761 children who were adopted between ages 2-18, the linguistic transition from their home country to America would be expectedly more difficult than those children who were adopted under the age of two. This is somewhat problematic as children reach a number of important developmental milestones before age two. Some of these include: smiling at familiar faces at 4 months, babbling at 6 months, imitating familiar speech sounds at 8 months, gestural communication at 10 months, first word around first birthday, and using two-word phrases by the age of 2 (CDC, 2016). If the child is adopted before 4 months of age, naturally it is to be expected that all of these milestones would be first experienced in English as that would be the language in most American homes. However, if the child is adopted anytime between four months and two years of age, there is cognitively meaningful exposure to two languages, which in turn creates an interesting

mix of linguistic possibilities. Even if children don't understand or produce words until 12 months of age, they are influenced by ambient language (Price, 2012). In fact, infants intuitively begin to ignore the sounds that are not relevant in their own language before the age of two (Werker & Tees, 1984), which can impact language development since the Chinese and English languages only share a finite number of phonemes. As a result the transition between these languages could be difficult if the child has neglected English phonemes completely. However, research has shown that depending on the infant's listening experience, the bias toward the native language can be reset (Juscyzk, 2001).

Another influential factor is the quality of health care provided to children prior to adoption either by their biological parents or by orphanages/institutions. Physical, motor, and cognitive development can all be affected by the adequacy of health services that children receive prior to adoption (Johnson, Miller, et al. 1992). If a child were behind cognitively due to poor health care in their native country, it would be acceptable to assume diluted linguistic abilities even before exposure to a second, brand new language since language acquisition is confounded with cognitive development and maturation (Snedeker, 2007). Interestingly, Miller and Hendrie (2000)compared the overall health conditions between Chinese orphanages and Eastern European orphanages and found that Chinese orphanages provided a much more satisfactory health and language environment than Eastern European institutions.

Language Development in IA Children. For children who are adopted after they are beginning to understand and produce words, the language development pattern is similar to that of bilingual children (Price, 2012). It most closely mirrors

the concept of subtractive bilingualism. Subtractive bilingualism occurs when the development of L1 is not adequately supported after the introduction of L2, and therefore is gradually lost (Hakuta, 1986). This is not to say that L1 is lost in every internationally adopted child. To avoid this generalization Roberts and Pollock coined the term "second first language acquisition" to describe the pattern of language development in IA children (Roberts & Pollock, 2005).

Krakow and Roberts (2005) conducted a 2003 study where they looked at the rate of language growth in 15 children between the ages of 7 and 11 months adopted from China. This age range falls in the middle of the aforementioned zone of linguistic developmental milestones. Using parental records reported approximately 8 months after the beginning of the study, Krakow and Roberts found that most children's expressive vocabularies were within normal limits by one and one-half years post-adoption (Krakow & Roberts, 2005). These toddlers showed faster rates of linguistic growth than monolingual peers, but also had a further to go in order to reach the norms for their ages.

Price, Pollock and Oller (2012) conducted a longitudinal study that included six female IA children. Each girl was born in a different Chinese providence; all adopted at different ages, all experienced different living situations in their home countries (i.e. orphanages versus foster homes) and only one medical issue was reported (S2 had a history of Hepatitis B). None of the girls had ever been exposed to English prior to adoption or had ever received prior speech-language evaluation or early intervention services. These girls were evaluated approximately every three months beginning around the third month post-adoption and ending around

the child's third birthday. The parents were instructed to complete speech-language

assessments, most specifically the MacArthur Communicative Development

Inventory and the Goldman-Fristoe Test of Articulation-2, for their child and

additionally reported communicative development through spontaneous language

samples. These language samples were transcribed initially using the International

Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) but as vocalizations increased and mean length of utterance

grew longer, the samples were then transcribed orthographically. After

approximately three years of data collection and analyses, the researchers

concluded that 5 out of the 6 children studied demonstrated normal or above

normal speech and language skills at age 3 while only one child was below normal

expectations. Based on the extensive, longitudinal data set from this set of children,

the authors concluded that neither age of adoption nor length of time

institutionalized appeared to be related to their linguistic outcomes (Price, Pollock,

& Oller, 2012).

Several items of interest beyond the data summarized above did emerge

from the study. They found that the level of parental concern regarding speech and

language development appeared to be associated with their child's linguistic

abilities at about age three years, which is when most children have entered the

conversation stage of language usage. Another thing worth noting is that out of the

six children, two of them had been producing approximately 5 Chinese/Mandarin

words prior to the study, and these same two children displayed the fastest rates of

English expressive vocabulary development (Price et al., 2012). This supports the

research discussed earlier that correlates exposure to another language with a

child's ability to acquire phonemes of another language.

Summary and Questions of the Study

In summation, language is the most complicated yet useful tool of the human species. It is complex and arbitrary with many subcategories that many language users are unaware of. Language acquisition is a fundamental process that is not universally agreed upon but is certainly influenced by socioeconomic status, education and environmental experiences. These elements are certainly different for internationally adopted children. Children who are internationally adopted experience a number of different linguistic environments prior to adoption. Internationally adopted children transitioning from home to school require help from not only their parents but also their teachers. The questions of the study are as follows:

1. Are there variations in the language development of children who are internationally adopted in comparison to their monolingual peers?

2. How does exposure to different linguistic environments prior to adoption affect internationally adopted children's academics?

3. Do internationally adopted children experience any pragmatic difficulties in monolingual school? Are they socially accepted or considered different in the eyes of their peers/teachers?

Methodology

Participants

One Caucasian family who had gone through the international adoption process with a child between the ages of 2 and 6 years old was nominated for and participated in this study. The family consisted of two English-speaking parents

with a child adopted from China. There was no control for the number of other

children in the household or the sex of the children. It was a convenient sample.

Materials

A questionnaire constructed from the literature was used to gather

background information about the family and the development of the child. A semi-

structured interview was used to gather information about the family values for

language use in the home as well as community and school; descriptions of the

child's development of language(s) as well as parental judgment of how this was

progressing; and the family's experience with their internationally adopted child's

transition between home and school, the latter defined as any out of home

developmental/educational context. The interview was digitally recorded.

Procedures

Nominations were sought by word of mouth in a home community known to

include a number of families who have internationally adopted. The nominating

person shared the researcher's contact information with potential participants.

Once contacted, the researcher shared the goal of the study, described the materials

to be used, and the procedures involved in the data collection. Following signed

consent, the researcher had the family complete the history questionnaire and the

semi-structured interview, which lasted approximately 30 minutes, was conducted.

A follow-up session was scheduled for member-checking of the themes and

anlayses, which took place one week later.

Analysis

Code names were used for all data collected. The questionnaire was analyzed for family configuration, language background, and parent information about the child's language use, history of delays/disorders, and transition to school. The semi-structured interview that followed from and elaborated on this information was qualitatively analyzed for themes, values, and perceptions. This resulted in identification of major and minor themes associated with key features of the child's language learning that any language development differences in their internationally adopted child; family thoughts, values, and decisions regarding the use of languages within the home then at school; and perceptions of community expectations of language proficiency in social and educational situations.

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Results

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Demographics and Background Information

The "Adams" family consisted of four people: mom Jane, dad David, older brother Charles, and youngest brother James. They live in an urban Texas town outside of the Dallas metropolitan area. The mother is a teacher. The father works in health care. The oldest son will be entering college in 2017. The second son will be attending high school this same year.   From the perspective of their family and

friends, this family was complete and happy, but they wished to complete their family with a girl baby, Laura, which led to international adoption.

Qualitative Data from the Interview: A narrative description of development

Laura's Background Information. While all of this was occurring in a Texas suburb, there was a completely different situation occurring in a small province of China. Most of this story is unknown. What is known is that a young mother gave birth to a little girl. She was born in a Chinese hospital. The baby was born with Hepatitis B, which is transferred to infants through infected mothers. However, with medication the birth mother and daughter left the hospital a few days later, both healthy but alone. There was no father present at the hospital or upon departure. A few days later, there was a little girl that arrived at that same hospital crying excessively. A Good Samaritan brought her to the hospital after he found her in a public park. Affixed to her blanket were a safety pin and a note that read, "I can not take care of her. Please find someone that can."

Jane and David discussed their options and came to the conclusion that they were not going to have more than three children and from there decided that adoption was the only viable option that would guarantee a baby girl. They researched different countries and adoption agencies for an entire year. They were guided to an adoption agency that was headquartered in China, one of the only countries that allow prospective adoptive parents (PAPs) to specify gender on their application for adoption. After months of background checks, fingerprinting, meetings and matching meetings, Jane and David were matched with a baby girl. They scheduled a month-long trip to China and the Knox family added a younger

sister. There was a mixture of emotions as Laura settled into her family at 25 months of age, but now nearly 2 years later, she is finishing kindergarten and has completely immersed herself into life in America.

Laura's Language Development. When it came to meeting speech and language milestones, Laura struggled from the beginning. Since Laura was adopted at 25 months old, she assumedly had only been exposed to Mandarin throughout her critical period for learning language. Upon arrival in China to meet their new family member, Jane and David expected Laura to be speaking Mandarin and not understand English in any capacity. Both assumptions proved to be untrue. In regard to speaking Mandarin, Laura did not produce any words in Mandarin, only non-words that contained Mandarin phonemes but no lexical meaning. But when called by name or asked to do something in Mandarin, she responded appropriately. This alerted Jane because her middle child, Jackson, experienced and still struggles with speech and language disorders. Since Jane had been exposed to speech therapy, she knew that Laura's lack of verbalization but implicit understanding of what is being said to her more than likely indicated an expressive language delay. But she feared not, because she had her miracle baby girl.

In regards to their fear that Laura wouldn't understand any English when adopted, Jane and David were amazed at all the English vocabulary Laura had learned during her years at the orphanage. Their guides, who were employed by the adoption agency to be liaisons between the orphanage and the PAPs, explained to them that in this particular orphanage there were a few employees who spoke English. If these employees understood that one of the children were in the process

of being adopted by an American family, they would start to expose the children to English before the PAP's arrival. While this action alone would never create a strong foundation in English, it was obvious to Jane and David that something had been done and that she had been exposed to English to some extent.

Jane and David were shocked at how little time passed before Laura produced her first English word. It was approximately one week post-adoption. They had to remain in China for roughly three weeks after they adopted Laura for legal reasons. They were staying in the Chinese hotel while all the paperwork was finalized and approved. Laura was with them. After every long day of travelling from different places in China, Jane would never fail to ask David for the key to unlock the door upon arrival at the hotel. After a week of this routine, Laura produced her first English word: key. Laura would ask for the 'key' so she could open the door for them. That was the only English word Laura produced while they were in China.

When they arrived back to the United States, Laura continued to produce new monosyllabic words such as "car", "bye", and "bug". She referred to both of her brothers as "gege" which is Mandarin for "older brother". However, it took Laura approximately 6 months to begin to refer to Jane and David as "mom and dad". During those 6 months Jane explained that Laura didn't refer to her as anything, but rather just gained her attention either through gesturing or physical contact. Mother also reported that Laura never expressed more than one word at a time. She also noted a discrepancy in Laura's understanding of English language in comparison to what she seemed to understand.

Two Years Post Adoption. As previously stated, Laura had no meaningful expressive language in her native language at the point of adoption. She was able to produce monosyllabic, plosive words very quickly post-adoption but had difficulty putting two or more words together that resulted in difficulty expressing herself. Now years later according to her parents, she still struggles with vocally expressing herself. Laura was administered a battery of speech, language, and hearing tests at age 3 (approximately 11 months post-adoption).

They began with a hearing test that revealed Laura was hearing impaired. Jane found this to be surprising and sought a second opinion. It was during the second test that the audiologist administering the test suggested that it was not Laura's inability to hear that was causing the negative outcome but rather Laura's lack of understanding what was required of her to do in order to past the test (in this case, to raise her hand when she heard the tone). To prove this theory, the audiologist tested Laura using technology that was placed in the inner ear and didn't require any patient response. This test's results confirmed that Laura's hearing was well within normal limits. She was then administered different speech and language tests and was diagnosed with a severe expressive language delay. This diagnosis matched Jane's initial assumptions post-adoption. She also was diagnosed with a mild articulation disorder and began speech therapy that same week. It was assumed that morphological errors would be present due to her lack of consistent exposure to English phonemes prior to adoption and her time spent in China was prolonged   in comparison to other adoptees. And while there are morphological errors and an expressive language delay, she does not let these obstacles stand in her way.

Laura's Pragmatic Skills. In school, Laura is well liked amongst her peers, both in her special education and general education classrooms. In Laura's school district, speech-language therapy takes place in the special education curriculum and therefore Laura has an IEP that requires her participation in both classrooms. Never the less, Laura's social skills are strong across the board. Her teachers report that Laura has friends in both classrooms, and that even though she has consistent and frequent morphological errors in her speech, her ability to either gesture or describe what she intends to say works for her. Jane, her mother also reported that when Laura attends friend's birthday parties, off campus events, etc. her friends and those of her mother have grown accustomed to Laura's style of speech. They understand that when Laura says, "dove" she means to say, "love" for example. Therefore, Laura has had a very positive first year school experience. According to her mother, the transition was not as complicated as anticipated.

Discussion

The questionnaire and interview conducted with the family provided information that was being sought per the questions of the study. Specifically, the initial question of the study asked if there are variations in the language development of children who are internationally adopted in comparison to their monolingual peers. Laura's first word mirrors that of a typically developing monolingual child because the phonemes /k/ and /i/ are both considered effortless phonemes to produce and in turn are produced by children easily (Jarzynski, 2011). As for adding to the one word vocalizations, Laura's case proved to be different from her typically developing   monolingual peers.   Laura struggled to produce   two

words utterance at a time, an age where typically developing children are producing two or more word phrases, Laura's development appears to be atypical. Rapin (1996) explained that in typically developing, monolingual children there are three different types of developmental language disorders that children can exhibit. These include: mixed receptive/expressive disorders, expressive disorders with adequate comprehension and slight phonological production issues, and higher order processing disorders that affect pragmatics. Laura falls into the second category due to her diagnosis of an expressive delay. This categorization allows Laura to identify with atypically developing monolingual children, but still not typically developing monolingual children. Therefore, there are developmental linguistic variations when comparing IA children and typically developing monolingual children.

The second question of the study asked if exposure to different linguistic environments prior to adoption affect internationally adopted children's academics. Laura's case shows there are correlations between pre-adoption linguistic environment and post-adoption linguistic abilities. Because Laura was adopted after 2 years of age, she missed the opportunity to meet her linguistic milestones in English. However, she also did not meet these milestones in Mandarin, her native language. This leads to a question of how consistent her exposure to Mandarin was in her orphanage and exactly what her linguistic environment was prior to adoption. She was brought to the orphanage as an infant, lived there for her entire conscious life up until approximately age 2 when she was brought to the United States. This began to fade in the US household; however, it can be asked   how strongly L1 was

established in the first place. This question would have to be answered in order to properly apply Laura's case to the question of the study. Based on Price, Pollock, and Oller's findings in their study back in 2012, it would be admissible to assume that exposure to different linguistic environments affect academics. Laura's expressive language delay and articulation disorder affect her academics, but it is difficult to conclude that her speech and language issues are tied to her linguistic environment prior to adoption.

The last question of the study asks if internationally adopted children experience any pragmatic difficulties in monolingual school and whether or not they are they socially accepted by their peers and teachers. The internationally adopted child in this study demonstrated no pragmatic issues and was according to her mother universally accepted by her peers. Reports by her teachers detailed that the child has many friends in every classroom setting in which she participates, and has a gentle temperament that allows for patience where other children may be frustrated. This supports Rapin's (1996) position that suggests the combination of feeling socially accepted and being understood by peers allows for a relatively unhindered ability to socialize, regardless of speech or language delays. Price (2012) even goes as far to as to say that a child's pragmatic skills and overall ability after being adopted provides evidence that children are resilient with regard to language learning abilities. The child of the study certainly exemplifies the idea that internationally adopted children can be socially accepted by their peers even if they exhibit morphological, articulation and/or expressive delays.

Limitations

This is a case study of one child and one family. Therefore, the results and conclusion cannot be generalized to other adopted children and families. Additionally, while this family may have many things in common with other families who adopt children internationally, no attempt was made to set a standard for comparison. Rather this was a sample of convenience.

Future Direction

This study suggests there is a place for qualitative research on the topic of international adoption, perhaps because each family's experience and child is unique in a number of theoretically and methodological ways. Using a case study approach in this project has certainly demonstrated this. Therefore, a key future direction would be to continue the study one case study at a time with similar families in order to see if the experiences and themes found in this research go beyond just the one family. These family stories may one day become an informational resource for those thinking of international adoption as well as those who will be working with the families. This could include speech-language pathologist, audiologists, teaching, and medical professionals.

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Appendix A

Family-Child History Questionnaire
Family
1. How many people live in your household? [   ] Adults   [   ] Children
2. What is your living situation [ ] city [ ] urban [ ] suburban [ ]rural
3. Which countries have you lived in? How long in each?
4. What languages are spoken in your home?
5. If employed what kind of work do you do? _____
6.

Child
Please complete the following information for each child in the family
1. Age
2. Position in family (e.g. only child, first child, 2nd child)
3. If adopted from which country
4. Describe development [ ] meeting milestones; [ ] areas of concern
     (please list if there are concerns, e.g. walking, talking, social skills)
5. What is your child's 1st language_____; 2nd language:_____

List three of your child's favorite activities.
    1)
    2)
    3)

1. Does your child attend [ ] day care, [ ] preschool program, [ ]school?
2. What language(s) are used in each of these that apply?

3. What age did you adopt your child?
                [ ] Birth-12 months [ ] 1-2 years [ ] 2-3 years [ ] 3-4 years
                [ ] 4-5 years [ ] 5-6 years [ ] 6 years or older

Appendix B

Semi-structured interview

1. How did you decide on your child's name?

2. What are the first three words your child spoke?

    a. What did you want them to say?

    b. What did they actually say?

3. Did you have any fears in adopting a child from another country?

    a. Did the adoption agency have any preparedness guidance or advice?

    b. Had you be in contact with anyone who had previously adopted?

        i. If so, did they detail any of their struggles or frustrations?

4. Did your child experience any frustrations with the transition between China

    and the U.S.?

    a. How did he/she cope with these frustrations?

        i. If verbally, did he/she use native language or English?

    b. Does your child use a different language for different things?

        i. What language does your child use for simple things like if they

            are hungry or tired?

        ii. What are the language choices that they are making?

5. Since your child's culture is going to start being reintroduced into her

    everyday routine, how do you plan to present each language to your

child/children? Informally just by conversation or will you include formal activities such as word play or book reading?

6. What expectations did you have for your child's language proficiency when s/he entered school?

   a. How well did you expect your child to speak both languages as they went to school for the first time?

   b. Do you think there have been any differences in how they are learning to read or spell because they have had exposure to two languages?

7. Since your child already attends an English only school/daycare/preschool, how did s/he adjust to school working with the two languages? Did they face any difficulties with their monolingual peers?

   a. Learning situations?

   b. Social situations?

8. What are your thoughts on a child being bilingual? Is this important over a lifetime, and if so, why?

Appendix C

Human Subjects Approval

February 17, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: Holly Heckmann
                             Fran Hagstrom

FROM: Ro Windwalker
                             IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #:   17-01-409

Protocol Title: *Bilingualism from Home to School: A Pilot Study*

Review Type: ☒ EXEMPT   ☐ EXPEDITED   ☐ FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 02/17/2017 Expiration Date: 02/16/2018

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/index.php). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 10 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.