

# ***Investigating the Impact of Bilingual Education on Cross-Cultural Competence: A Case Study of a Prominent International School in Shenzhen, China***

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**Abstract:** This article focuses on the impact of bilingual education on students' language proficiency and cross-cultural understanding, utilizing a case study of a prominent international school in Shenzhen, China. The research objective is to explore the bilingual education program and cross-cultural activities implemented at the school, evaluating their impact on students' language proficiency and cross-cultural understanding. Methodologically, the study involves collecting data through surveys and interviews with students, teachers, and school administrators, analyzing the data using qualitative research techniques, and comparing the results with those of previous studies. The findings reveal that the bilingual education program and cross-cultural activities have had a positive impact on the students' language proficiency and cross-cultural understanding, particularly for students with lower initial proficiency. Additionally, the study contributes to the body of knowledge by providing insights into effective bilingual education practices and cross-cultural programming that can be implemented in other international schools with similar student populations.

**Keywords:** International Schools, Bilingual Education, Cross-cultural Competence, Language Proficiency

## **1. Introduction**

International schools in China have a rich history that can be traced back to the 1980s, when the country began attracting foreign investment and professionals through economic reforms. As a result, there was a growing demand for international education to cater to expatriate families. Today, international schools in major cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen offer various curricula, attracting both expatriate and local Chinese families seeking a globalized education for their children. The growth of international schools in China has had a significant impact on the development of bilingual studies in the country. Many international schools incorporate bilingual programs. In the context of Shenzhen, a prominent hub for international education and cultural exchange, bilingual education has gained significant attention. The purpose of this research paper is to examine the practices and outcomes of bilingual education and cross-cultural competence in a well-established international school, Sendelta International Academy, located in Shenzhen, China. There are several reasons why it has been chosen to be the focus of this study. Firstly, the international school in

Shenzhen is renowned for its bilingual education program, which provides students with the opportunity to receive an education in English and Chinese. This program is unique in comparison to other schools in China as it caters to the diverse needs of students who have different language backgrounds and cultural experiences. Secondly, the international school in Shenzhen has a diverse student population, representing various nationalities and cultures. This diversity creates an ideal environment for students to learn about different cultures and develop cross-cultural competence. Thirdly, the international school in Shenzhen has a well-structured bilingual education program and cross-cultural activities that are carefully planned and implemented. To provide a comprehensive analysis, this paper will draw upon the work of scholars such as Wang, who sheds light on the practices, policies, and concepts of bilingual education specific to China [1]. Additionally, the insights provided by Leung and Creese on the benefits of bilingualism and the challenges faced by bilingual students in English-dominant schools will be particularly relevant to the Shenzhen context [2]. The findings from this case study can serve as a reference for other international schools facing similar challenges related to language proficiency and cross-cultural competence development among students.

## 2. Literature Review

Baker lays the foundation for understanding bilingual education and bilingualism, providing key principles and insights into its theoretical underpinnings [3]. Its theoretical underpinnings are based on the principles of bilingualism, language development, cultural diversity, and several other insights. To be successful, bilingual education requires appropriate programming, social immersion, professional development, and social support. Baker and Wright further elaborate on the principles of bilingual education, highlighting the importance of language development and cultural diversity in educational settings [4].

Cummins explores the intricate relationship between language, power, and pedagogy, emphasizing the intersecting dynamics influencing bilingual children's experiences [5]. Cummins and Early propose the concept of identity texts and their collaborative creation as a means of empowering students in multilingual schools [6]. These frameworks contribute to a nuanced understanding of the complex processes involved in developing cross-cultural competence within bilingual educational contexts.

Wang and Liu focus on international schools in China that offer bilingual education programs and explore the impact of these programs on students' cross-cultural understanding and language proficiency [7]. They dove deeper into the field with a case study approach to examine the role of bilingual education in promoting cross-cultural competence among students attending international schools [8]. Data were further gathered from international schools around the world to examine the relationship between bilingual education and cross-cultural competence and its impact on students' language proficiency and cultural understanding [9]. The works presented in this literature review focus mainly on bilingual education and cross-cultural competence in international schools and immigrant contexts, emphasizing the need for further exploration in other educational settings and populations.

## 3. Methodology

**Research Design:** Interview questions are tailored and modified based on the context and specific goals of this research. Interviews provide a valuable opportunity to gather in-depth insights and perspectives from participants, allowing for a richer understanding of their experiences and perceptions. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted, as they provide a balance between flexibility and structure, enabling participants to share their thoughts while ensuring consistent data

collection across interviews. Tables 1 and 2 show the specific questions asked in this article. Ethical considerations will be of utmost importance in this study. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, ensuring they understand the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Participants' confidentiality and privacy will be protected by using pseudonyms and securely storing all data.

Table 1: Question 1

<b>What are the specific practices and approaches to bilingual education implemented in Sendelta International Academy?</b>
Can you describe the bilingual education program at Sendelta International Academy?
What teaching methods and strategies are employed in the bilingual education program?
Are there specific policies or guidelines that inform the implementation of bilingual education at Sendelta International Academy?
Can you provide examples of specific activities or initiatives that promote bilingualism and multicultural understanding within the school?
What resources are available to facilitate effective bilingual instruction?

Table 2: Question 2

<b>How does bilingual education contribute to the development of cross-cultural competence among students in Sendelta International Academy?</b>
In your experience, how does bilingual education contribute to the development of students' language proficiency?
How does bilingual education foster cultural awareness and understanding among students at Sendelta International Academy?
Can you share any examples of how bilingual education enhances students' intercultural communication skills?
Have you observed any tangible outcomes or benefits of bilingual education in terms of students' cross-cultural competence?
How does Sendelta International Academy assess or evaluate students' development of cross-cultural competence within the framework of bilingual education?

**Participants and Sampling Strategy:** The participants for this study will consist of a diverse range of individuals to obtain comprehensive insights into the impact of bilingual education on cross-cultural competence. The selection of participants will be based on purposive sampling, which involves deliberately selecting individuals who possess relevant experiences and insights in the field of bilingual education and cross-cultural competence.

For the educators' component, the participants will include ESL teachers, administrative teachers, and members of the principal board from schools with bilingual education programs. ESL teachers possess valuable expertise and firsthand experience in teaching language skills to students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Administrative teachers and members of the principal board provide insights into the systemic and institutional aspects of bilingual education. By interviewing these individuals, the study aims to gather in-depth perspectives on the implementation, challenges, and effectiveness of bilingual education programs.

The students' component will comprise individuals from various backgrounds to ensure a diverse representation. This includes students who have transitioned from a public school to an international school, as they can provide insights into the differences in language acquisition and cross-cultural competence between these educational environments. Additionally, students who were born and

raised in Hong Kong but have lived in an English-speaking country and then moved back to China will also be included. Their unique experiences of navigating different linguistic and cultural settings will contribute valuable perspectives. Furthermore, students who have been in an international learning system from the start will be selected. Their experiences and proficiency in multiple languages can shed light on the impact of bilingual education on cross-cultural competence from an early age.

By incorporating these specific groups of students and educators, this research aims to capture a diverse range of experiences and perspectives within the context of bilingual education and cross-cultural competence. This will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the influence of bilingual education on developing cross-cultural competence in different educational settings.

## **4. Results Analysis**

Bilingual education has been shown to have numerous benefits for students, including improved cognitive, social, and emotional development. It provides students with the opportunity to learn in two languages, fostering cross-cultural understanding and competence, which is increasingly important in a globalized world. Bilingual education also promotes higher levels of bilingualism and biliteracy, which are critical for students to succeed in today's interconnected world.

### **4.1. Curriculum Design and Instructional Approaches**

The bilingual education program at Sendelta International Academy exemplifies the seamless integration of English language instruction with Chinese language and culture, offering a comprehensive approach that promotes bilingualism and nurtures multicultural understanding. By employing a variety of instructional methodologies, the curriculum is designed to facilitate students' language development and academic attainment [3]. Through the integration of English and Chinese, students are fully immersed in a linguistic and cultural environment that fosters their overall language abilities and cross-cultural competence. The curriculum incorporates authentic materials, captivating literature, and media from Chinese culture, enabling students to gain a deeper understanding of the Chinese language and its cultural nuances [10]. Students participate in cultural immersion experiences, such as celebrating traditional Chinese festivals and engaging in activities like Chinese calligraphy workshops. These experiences not only expose students to the richness of Chinese culture but also foster cultural awareness and appreciation.

In conclusion, Sendelta International Academy's integration of English language instruction with Chinese language and culture is founded on a carefully designed curriculum that prioritizes language proficiency development and cultural assimilation. The program, supported by evidence from other esteemed international schools, not only enhances students' language abilities but also cultivates their cross-cultural competence, preparing them for success in an increasingly interconnected world [11][12].

### **4.2. Integration of Chinese Language and Culture in English Language Instruction**

The integration of Chinese language and culture into English language instruction is a core aspect of the bilingual education program at Sendelta International Academy. Specific curriculum components and activities are designed to promote cross-cultural learning and foster cultural awareness among students. Additionally, the curriculum incorporates authentic materials, literature, and media from Chinese culture to provide students with a deeper understanding of Chinese language and its cultural contexts.

### 4.3. Language Proficiency Goals and Assessment Methods

To assess students' language development, Sendelta International Academy utilizes a range of assessment methods, including formative assessments such as classroom participation, presentations, and group projects, as well as summative assessments such as standardized language proficiency tests. These assessments provide valuable feedback on students' language proficiency and inform instructional decisions.

## 5. Promoting Bilingualism and Cultural Understanding

Parental involvement and support have been recognized as crucial factors in promoting bilingualism and cultural understanding [13]. Educators should actively engage and collaborate with parents by providing them with information about the benefits of bilingual education and strategies to foster language development at home [14]. Parent workshops, cultural celebrations, and parent-child language learning activities can strengthen the connection between home and school environments, motivating parents to actively participate in their child's bilingual journey [3]. Collaborative partnerships with local communities and institutions play a significant role in promoting bilingualism and cultural understanding [15]. Bilingual programs can establish partnerships with local Chinese language and cultural organizations, facilitating joint cultural events, language exchange programs, or community service projects [16]. Extracurricular activities and cultural events provide excellent platforms to enhance bilingualism and cultural understanding among students [17]. Organizing cultural festivals, performances, or language clubs exposes students to diverse languages, traditions, and customs, reinforcing language skills and fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of different cultures [18]. Continuous professional development is essential to ensure high-quality bilingual instruction and create a vibrant multicultural educational environment [19]. Training workshops, conferences, and collaborative learning communities provide opportunities for teachers to enhance their understanding of bilingual pedagogy, linguistic theories, and cultural competency [13]. Investing in the growth and development of the teaching staff is crucial to staying updated with best practices in bilingual education [3].

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of English language instruction with Chinese language and culture through bilingual education programs offers numerous benefits and opportunities for students in international schools. This article has highlighted key findings and contributions in various aspects of bilingual education, including curriculum design, language proficiency goals, cultural integration, and successful case studies. However, it is important to also recognize the challenges faced in bilingual education. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes strategies such as differentiated instruction, targeted language support, continuous professional development for teachers, and collaborative partnerships with local communities and institutions. By promoting bilingualism and cultural understanding, these programs not only enhance students' language skills but also develop their cross-cultural competence, preparing them for success in an increasingly globalized world. The integration of Chinese language and culture in English language instruction fosters a deeper appreciation and understanding of Chinese heritage, connecting students with their cultural roots and promoting cultural exchange. Future research will explore the long-term effects of bilingual education on students' language proficiency, academic achievement, and cross-cultural competence.

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