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Language is a ubiquitous part of the human experience. While for many, one language will be spoken for daily use, numerous individuals will use more than one language at home, and even in the workplace. This usage of multiple languages in the workplace could be seen to have unique properties, and potentially even advantages and disadvantages. In the following, bilingualism, the use of at least two languages, and multilingualism, the use of more than two languages, will be put into the context of a workplace environment. The usage of consulting various disciplines in an interdisciplinary and/or multidisciplinary approach should allow a more robust understanding to be gained. Therefore, in the following, an economic, sociological, and anthropological lens will be included to provide an interdisciplinary look into the various arguments for, against, benefits of, and detriments of bilingual or multilingualism within the workplace.

Taking a cue from the business world, it's often said if there's not a business case for something, then it can't be done. While an exaggeration, this line of thinking is very common in today's world, and it does speak to some part of how things are done. As such, in order to get a true interdisciplinary look into bilingualism in the workplace, the discipline of economics may need to be consulted. One key insight into beginning to understand bilingualism in the workplace, is to determine how being bilingual can affect your job prospects and earnings. In delving into this topic from an economics view, one will first be confronted with the fact that there is no broad consensus yet on if and how a person being bilingual affects their earnings in the first place.

In a summary of previous studies, Chigon states that 1.5 and second generation English speakers in the United States have been found to earn more than monolingual English speakers on average (Chigon 2013). In this context, generation 1.5, is an immigrant that migrated as a child with. In these cases the parents and children would both be first generation immigrants, however, the differences between these two situations has led to this distinction being made in work such as Chigon's. The study clarifies, though, that other studies have found that there is no difference, and some have even come to the conclusion that there is in fact a disadvantage for bilingual speakers. These varied findings can possibly be explained by the fact that there are competing frameworks within economic fields on whether bilingualism could even benefit a person in the workplace and economically at all. Some see it as a skill and talent that can be harnessed. Some, however, simply view it economically as a mere facet of one's ethnicity and heritage, with a limited ability to be converted into real-world economic gain While Chigon's study itself acknowledges the previous findings and theories, it importantly, also explains why the inconclusive or different findings of the past, may be corrected with innovations and refinements included within Chigon's 2013 study. With the history of these varied results and theories in mind, a few studies attempted to get to the bottom of what the effects are for a bilingual worker in their workplace in other various contexts.

In one study, the Welsh labor market was used to compare monolingual English speakers to bilingual Welsh and English speakers (Henley & Jones, 2005). The findings from the study seem to indicate bilinguals fared 8-10% better overall. Interestingly, however, the difference between the two seems to drop significantly when one only considers individuals who have a monolingual workplace, even if they are bilingual. To put it another way, despite bilinguals faring better overall, it seemingly had nothing to do with actually utilizing the language in the

workplace. The study suggests this difference may be due to employers seeking bilingual workers not due to their skills or use of multiple languages itself, but due to some tertiary factor. The study posits that governmental regulation may be the major contributing factor to employers selecting in such a way. There is, however, another possible factor posited by the study that could explain this effect. This factor being the possibility that bilinguals as a whole are advantaged in some way by their bilingualism, that doesn't necessarily require them to utilize their language skills themselves. For instance, the study posits bilinguals may be more informed, especially about the labor market, which in turn would yield the higher result. The study stresses the need for more insight into this possibility in future studies.

The other study by Chigon looks into Koreans and Korean Americans in the United States labor market. This study is quick to point out that in previous studies into bilingual 1.5- and second-generation Korean Americans, there was not a significant benefit found for the workers, at least economically. In the study, 1.5 generation immigrants refers to immigrants who immigrate at a young age. However, the study goes on to find such a benefit under specific circumstances. These circumstances seem to include Korean men born within the United States, and 1.5 generation Korean women. The circumstances also seem to be affected by other factors like geographical location and field of work. For instance, those born in the United States seem to have an earnings premium in major metropolitan areas, and within managerial fields. On the flip side, though, those who immigrate seem to be disadvantaged in the same environments. In fact, 1.5 generation Korean men were singled out to be at a clear earnings disadvantage in metropolitan centers and within professional fields, even when the centers housed a large Korean-speaking population.

The study goes on to propose explanations for the findings, thusly. For the explanation of the benefits, this study, like the previous, clearly states that other hard to observe factors could explain why bilingual speakers may earn more at times. One possible explanation proposed was that they may earn more due to the ability to make connections with family and community, and find more resources this way. This study also goes on to propose as well that the reason why 1.5 generation Koreans are disadvantaged, can likely be attributed to the discrimination faced due to speaking with an accent. This study too stresses the need for future insight and study into the questions surrounding the economic circumstances of bilingualism in the workplace. In terms of trends, it seems that both studies seemed to start from a place where the wisdom of the field was such that bilingual workers were seen as being disadvantaged when compared to other workers. While both studies did see instances where there was less advantage to be had among bilingual workers, both studies also each found circumstances where bilingual speakers did in fact benefit as well. This suggests that the picture of bilingualism is a complex phenomenon, who's possible benefits are either bolstered or squandered by outside factors at play. In this way, each study points to the need for an interdisciplinary analysis, as these complex factors affect the economic outcomes of individuals, likely stem from areas outside simply the economic disciplines themselves.

The second discipline being looked at is Sociology. This discipline can help provide immense insight into bilingualism in the workplace, as language itself is a social phenomenon propagated by civilization and people groups worldwide. To begin this journey, one may want to look into some specific examples of bilingualism in practice. This is in part because of the sheer ubiquity of bilingualism as a practice. Seemingly, since there were two languages in contact there

have been those that have spoken more than one language, meaning there's a wealth of information that could be derived from sociology.

Hernández-León & Lakhani's took to studying bilingual second generation Mexican Americans within industry jobs in Georgia (Hernández-León & Lakhani, 2013). The study states that while bilingualism had seemingly had a positive effect on those studies, the men of the study stayed within the industrial field and saw significantly more social mobility and workplace success there. The women of the field, meanwhile, often left the industry sector, citing harassment and blocked mobility as common causes. From there they would often move to sectors like the service sector. The men of the study improved their standing using their bilingualism, using it to attain managerial jobs their monolingual parents often could not attain. The women likewise too could attain jobs unavailable to their parents, albeit in different sectors, with perhaps less managerial opportunities than their male counterparts. The study further highlights the need for an interdisciplinary look, as even divides like gender identity can completely transform the effects of bilingualism within the workplace and/or home.

The findings of Macías' study compounds on some of the conclusions of the previous study (Macías, 1997). In particular, it further analyzes the usage power language has, and how it can be wielded in places like a workplace to achieve certain goals by an individual. One important conclusion is that this utilization of language can even be done so completely subconsciously and can have unintended effects. When combined with the information provided by Hernández-León & Lakhani's study, it puts into context that the difference in the effects stemming from the bilingualism of men versus women is not necessarily due to conscious efforts. In turn, because of the nature of this, language can play an instrumental role in discrimination. This paints a picture of a sociological phenomenon that can be used to either

keep power within the hands of the monolingual majority, or to perhaps even gain power at the expense of the bilingual minority. With this in mind, the study gives great care to how this phenomenon can be wielded, even unintentionally, in the workplace to discriminate. A call to action is then further uttered, as the study claims that if you are seeking a good healthy workplace environment, good policies and intentions will not go far enough. Significant training, learning, planning, and effort is required to understand the responses from monolingual workers lashing out, or imposing their will, and also to understand the effects that impose psychologically on bilingual workers simply seeking to thrive in their own workplace.

Another important reason as to why the details of such policy crafting is so important, especially in America, the rate of bilingual workers in the workforce is only growing more and more (Colón, 2002). In 1990 there were 1 in 7 Americans who had a primary language other than English, while in 2000 it seemingly rose to 1 in 5, with the trend expected to continue well into the future. Meanwhile, certain regions within America have even more language diversity, as in California, 40% of the inhabitants use a language other than English within their home. With the conclusions of the previous study in mind, and how language can be used to discriminate in the workplace, it makes sense then that Colón predicts a continuing increase in conflicts within workplaces over “English-only laws” and potential discrimination against bilingual speakers.

An important conclusion from Colón’s study, and an important argument for the promotion of bilingualism, or the reduction in restrictions against it, is the study's characterization of “code switching”. Code switching within the study is defined as the alternating of multiple languages between sentences, or even within them. The study points out how the literature available is quite clear that code switching has utility, and can be employed to achieve a manner of social and communicative goals. In addition, it seems that code switching

itself is not always a conscious effort. This makes it so that one could not simply “turn off” their code switching in response to a rule or regulation. The study stresses that most current legislation and many workplaces have often acted in contradiction to this and other facts about bilingual workers, and it has been used to potentially harm those speakers much more than was previously claimed.

The final discipline to be consulted with is psychology. Psychology is an important discipline to include within the conversation, as one can use it to gain proper insight into the possible answers for a number of questions. One question, related closely to the conclusions of the previous study that psychology could answer, is how does a bilingual brain function in comparison to a monolingual one. According to Colón's previous study, in the past, a code switching bilingual was seen as a person within a transitory stage (Colón, 2002). It was thought this code switching and interweaving of multiple languages would subside as the speaker became “completely fluent” in both languages. This would later be found to be incorrect, and code switching was seen as more natural than previously thought. Ansaldo et al.'s study similarly states that the traditional view within cognitive psychology was that a bilingual was thought to have two monolinguals within the same brain, with perhaps a code switching process to change between the two. Studies have since found that through efforts like tracking neuroimaging patterns, different language usages share similar foundations, with overlap between the two increasing the more proficient one becomes in their bilingual ability (Ansaldo et al., 2008).

Findings like these are a great example of showcasing how scientific advancements can have real impacts into the work and lives of everyday individuals. While previously, the common wisdom allowed room for easy workplace discrimination to take place, newer evidence has

contradicted those beliefs, which could potentially allow for future rule changes and law-making to take place to right the wrongs.

Gándara in 2015 takes the findings of psychology further, directly citing findings to make the case that bilinguals do indeed have an advantage in the workplace (Gándara, 2015). It's claimed, in fact, that bilinguals have numerous cognitive and psychological advantages such as ability to focus, memory ability, and cognitive flexibility. In one of the studies, a lot of the psychological data surrounding bilingualism was summarized in the conclusion by the authors, as they stated that bilingualism seemingly leads to a development of control processes to manage the complex processes associated with being bilingual (Bialystok et al., 2008). This development then leads to improvements in cognition more generally.

While Gándara goes on to conclude that there may in fact be a wage penalty for bilingual workers in America, it's important to note that they conclude so because of a variety of socio-economic factors, and not due to psychological ones (Gándara, 2015). In fact, Gándara seems to hold bilingualism as a skill, its utilization as a virtue, with a capstone of the paper being that within America today that useful skill is not being compensated properly in proportion to the benefits it provides to the individual worker, and their workplace in turn.

In conclusion, while many unknowns, immeasurable, and areas where further study are needed into bilingualism in the workplace, there are also numerous insights that can already be taken away that help improve one's understanding of the topic, if one consults with the literature. The economics, sociological, and psychological fields discussed can all seemingly be utilized in this way individually, but together, greater width and depths of knowledge can be attained.

While the economic value for bilingualism certainly exists, the extent of that value is determined by other factors such as sociological, and psychological ones. As Gándara points out,

there has historically been a wage penalty for being bilingual (Gándara, 2015). Henley & Jones's study, combined with Chigon's findings however, seem to provide evidence that this is not always the case, with the trends perhaps reversing, with some markets such as the Welsh Labor market seeing bilinguals earn more consistently (Henley & Jones, 2005; Chigon 2013).

Bilingualism is also seemingly heavily affected by the sociological context of the environment of the worker or workplace. Studies like Colón's use the understanding of this to emphasize the importance of managers and lawmakers to include this wider context into their rules and regulations concerning the use of bilingualism in the workplace (Colón, 2002). While Colón's motives are not to be assumed herein, using the aforementioned studies as a knowledge base could lead one to perform a similar call to action. This is because, as Gándara points out, there is a wealth of evidence pointing to bilingualism as being beneficial and a skill for a worker and the workplace (Gándara, 2015). Despite this, it continues to be misunderstood and undervalued, as sociological, economic, and psychological effects all combine to create the current paradigm surrounding bilingualism in the workplace.

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