

BILINGUALISM

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Definition of bilingualism:

- Bloomfield (1935: 56), defines it as 'the native-like control of two languages'.
A very restrictive view of only 'perfect bilinguals'.
- Haugen, 1953: bilingualism begins "at the point where the speaker of one language can produce complete meaningful utterances in the other language"
- Mackey, 1968: "the alternate use of two or more languages"
- Macnamara (1967a) considers bilingual any person who possesses a minimal competence in only one of the four language skills, listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing, in a language other than his mother tongue.

Between these two extremes a lot has been said.

An interesting view:

Grosjean (1985a) defines the bilingual as more than the sum of two monolinguals, i.e. the bilingual has also developed some unique language behaviour.

Difference between bilingualism and bilinguality?

(Hamers and Blanc 2000)

Bilingualism: refers to the state of a linguistic community in which two languages are in contact with the result that two codes can be used in the same interaction and that a number of individuals are bilingual (**societal bilingualism**); but it also includes the concept of **bilinguality (or individual bilingualism)**.

Bilinguality: is the psychological state of an individual who has access to more than one linguistic code as means of social communication; the degree of access will vary along a number of dimensions which are psychological, cognitive, psycholinguistic, etc (Hamers, 1981).

Process of bilingualism: to understand the process of bilingualism, it should first be understood that human beings feel the need to speak. He/she speaks the language of their environment.

The learning or acquiring a second language is quite a different matter. Except in case where the child's parents are bilinguals or one of them is, learning a second language becomes either a deliberate activity or one imposed on the child or adult by social, political or religious factors acting on him/her.

Classification according to the age of an individual:

Early Bilingual: two types (subdivisions):

- **Simultaneous Bilinguals:** both languages are acquired simultaneously. Simultaneous early bilingualism refers to a child who learns two languages at the same time, from birth. This generally produces a strong bilingualism, called additive bilingualism. This also implies that the child's language development is bilingual.
- **Sequential Bilinguals** The second language (L2) is acquired after the first one (L1).

Classification according to the age of an individual:

- Sequential, consecutive or successive early Bilinguals

The second language (L2) is acquired after the first one (L1).

It refers to a child who has already partially acquired a first language and then learns a second language early in childhood (for example, when a child moves to an environment where the dominant language is not his native language). This generally produces a strong bilingualism (or additive bilingualism), but the child must be given time to learn the second language, because the second language is learned at the same time as the child learns to speak. This implies that the language development of the child is partly bilingual.

Classification according to the age of an individual:

→ **Late Bilingual :** refers to bilingualism when the second language is learned after the age of 6 or 7; especially when it is learned in adolescence or adulthood. Late bilingualism is a consecutive bilingualism which occurs after the acquisition of the first language (after the childhood language development period). This is what also distinguishes it from early bilingualism. With the first language already acquired, the late bilingual uses their experience to learn the second language.

Classification according to skill:

There are no clearly defined levels of bilingual skills, but it is rather a continuum, ranging from

Equilingual 'perfect bilingual'

If somebody passes in any situation in both languages for a native speaker, i.e. he or she is indistinguishable from a native speaker.

This is the strictest kind of defining bilingualism.

Balanced Bilingual

Someone who is more or less equally proficient in both languages, but will not necessarily pass for a native speaker in both languages.

Unbalanced or dominant Bilingual

A person being more proficient in one of the two languages (in most cases native-like).

Passive Bilingual

A person who is a native speaker in one and is capable of understanding but not speaking another language.

Classification according to skill:

Additive bilingualism and subtractive bilingualism:

The term additive bilingualism refers to the situation where a person has acquired the two languages in a balanced manner. It is a strong bilingualism. Subtractive bilingualism refers to the situation where a person learns the second language to the detriment of the first language, especially if the first language is a minority language. In this case, mastery of the first language decreases, while mastery of the other language (usually the dominant language) increases. These expressions and their associated concepts were created by Wallace Lambert, the Canadian researcher who has been given the title of "the father of bilingualism research".

Passive Bilingual

A person who is a native speaker in one and is capable of understanding but not speaking another language.

Types of bilingualism

Coordinate Bilingualism: In this type, the person learns the languages in separate environments, and words of the two languages are kept separate with each word having its own specific meaning. This may also be referred to as **subtractive bilingualism**.

- The learning of two languages in two different settings, the words of the languages are kept completely separated each word has its own independent meaning
E.g. school bilingualism: an English student studying Spanish at school = 2 languages, 2 different contexts.

eg: Apple vs. manzana

Compound Bilingualism

The person learns the two languages in the same context where they are used concurrently, so that there is a fused representation of the languages in the brain. This is the case when a child is brought up by bilingual parents, or those from two different linguistic backgrounds. This is additive in nature.

- The learning of two languages in the same context, used at the same time
- Loewe (1888) "two-member system of the same language"
E.g. cultural bilingualism: an individual at home who has an English mother and Spanish father, and speaks the two languages with their parents.

eg: Apple vs manzana

Types of bilingual communities

- In an extreme case a community may have strict separation of domains with stable bilingualism.
- Conversely, a community's bilingualism may be very unstable using both languages in all domains.
- Intermediate communities may use one language for certain domains but both in others.

Bilingual behaviour

- **Code-switching**
- **Borrowing**
- **Interference**

Bilingual behaviour

1. **Why do we become bilingual?**
2. **What are the advantages of bilingualism?**
3. **why is it important to study bilingualism and bilingual education?**

Why do we become bilingual?

There are many reasons:

- born into a family where the parents speak two different languages;
- live in a bilingual society where a foreign language does not correspond to the language that is spoken at home;
- immigration to another country;
- it is a requirement for certain professions (e.g. teachers, translation, journalism abroad) etc.

What are the advantages of bilingualism?

- It often provides the ability to communicate with different people of different cultures, nationalities, countries.
- Bilingual people (particularly early bilinguals) have more open, flexible and creative thinking. This is what is called divergent thinking; it produces original and less conventional solutions, i.e.; a bilingual person has two words for a single object or a single thought, which in turn means that they have a broader semantic repertoire.

- Compared to monolingual children, bilingual children can concentrate with greater ease and not be distracted as much.
- In adults, bilingualism helps to reduce the effects of aging on the brain (stimulating the memory).

- Bi/multilingualism has economic advantages. The employment rate for bilingual people with the two or more languages is higher than that for those who speak only one language.

Why is it important to study bilingualism and bilingual education?

Positive

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Negative

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Thank you!