



Promoting Childhood Bilingualism at Home and at School

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## **Changes of representations of bilingualism over time**

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# 1. Introduction

There is nothing more stable in our unbalanced world than continuous changes, and the theory of bilingualism is not an exception. Bilingualism is a dynamic linguistic phenomenon whose representations inexorably shifted over the course of time due to a fluid reality. Theoretical frameworks of bilingualism have been challenged by a wide range of linguists.

Why is it relevant to investigate changes of bilingual representations? Almost forty years ago, Grosjean (1982) stated that bilingual individuals make up half of the total number of people on Earth. Nowadays, bilingual individuals can be found in almost every part of the world. However, according to Edwards (2007), at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, only a quarter of all countries established bilingual policy at the official level (as cited in Romaine). This evidence highlights that, despite the presence of this phenomenon in almost every country of the world, there are still ambiguities surrounding the attitude to bilingualism among educational policy makers.

Currently, under the influence of globalisation, bilingualism is not something extraordinary. Notwithstanding this fact, *the monoglossic ideologies* still prevail in a linguistic community. In this essay, we will trace the gradual development of perspectives of bilingualism and how the ideologies exert an influence over representations of this concept.

In the second chapter, the concepts of societal and individual bilingualism and their connection will be clarified. In addition, we will discuss definitions of bilingualism. Moreover, we will examine *monolingual* and *holistic* views of bilingualism and factors that shaped them through the period of time.

In the third chapter, we will review balanced and dynamic representations of bilingualism. Besides, we will find the answer to the question if bilingual theory moved from the deadlock of petrified monoglossic views.

In conclusion, we will try to formulate hypotheses for the further development of bilingualism in the nearest future.

## 2. What is bilingualism?

According to Harris and Taylor, the very first mention of bilingualism is dated by the first century AD in Rome with hot discussions around the concept (as cited in Butler, 2013). We would like to emphasize at the outset, that two thousand years later the debates on the concept of bilingualism are not going to abate since opposite language ideologies are at variance.

There is general agreement that a single definition of bilingualism does not exist, as bilingualism can mean a lot of things to different people. If an average person hears the term ‘bilingualism’, they will probably suppose that bilingualism is simply the ability to speak two languages on an equal level. However, we need to ask ourselves if balance is possible in all contexts and situations where two languages are used. Defining bilingualism is a vexed issue because different dimensions are taken into account, such as language proficiency, age of acquisition, functional ability, etc.

First and foremost, we admit that bilingualism is possible on both *individual* and *community* levels. What is the connection between these levels? *Individual bilingualism*, according to Hamers and Blanc (2000), is called *bilinguality*, and it can exert a direct influence on *societal bilingualism* (as cited in Butler, 2013). In other words, there is an interconnection between these two concepts, seeing that individual bilingualism can make gradual changes in society.

We start to define the concept of individual bilingualism in this paragraph. William Mackey was one of the first researchers who proposed to investigate the phenomenon of bilingualism taking into consideration such factors as memory, aptitude, intelligence and interference of languages between each other (Chin & Wigglesworth, 2007). All these factors are leading to different categorisations of bilingualism. We will mention Mackey’s variant of the definition below because his publication in 1962 served as a starting point for other linguists in the next years of investigation of bilingualism. Which factors did other researchers take into account during the formation of the appropriate definition of bilingualism? The next paragraph sheds light on this issue.

According to Bloomfield, a bilingual should possess “native-like control of two or more languages” (as cited in Butler, 2013). This definition is too strict: if this definition will be taken, the amount of ‘true bilinguals’ on Earth will decline markedly, because people who have equal language competence in both languages are rare. In contrast to Bloomfield, Mackey (1962: 52) stated that bilingualism is “the ability to use more than one language”, while Weinreich proposed to define bilingualism as “the practice of alternatively using two languages” (as cited in Chin & Wigglesworth). Some definitions are too extreme, unrealistic and make high

demands to language proficiency (Bloomfield), whereas other definitions are too loose (Mackey, Weinreich). However, the definition of Mackey is suitable within the realities of globalisation, as it does not limit the bilingual person in the context of ‘native-like’ control.

From Bloomfield’s definition we extract the factor of language proficiency (native-like control), but there are much more factors influencing the formation of definitions of bilingualism; the notion of bilingualism is simply controversial.

## **2.1. The monolingual (fractional) view and the holistic view of bilingualism**

Grosjean (1985, 1994) presented two opposite perspectives on individual bilingualism to the research community (as cited in Baker, 2001): *the monolingual or fractional view* of bilingualism and *the holistic view* of bilingualism.

The monolingual or, in other words, fractional view of bilingualism presupposes estimating of the bilingual as “*two monolinguals in one person*”. The monolingual view of bilingualism was criticized by Grosjean (1989) on the grounds that the more detailed picture revealed six negative effects of this view.

The first negative consequence, according to Grosjean, is that a person is considered as a bilingual only in case if they are completely fluent and balanced in both languages. We support this counterargument, because even experienced professional interpreters have a dominant language in their linguistic repertoire.

The second negative effect is that language competence of bilinguals was estimated from the monolingual standards.

The third effect is that language experts remained sceptical about the positive effects of bilingualism on cognitive abilities of the brain. Such doubts seemingly were based on scientific data because until the 1960s studies showed that bilingual children learn languages more slowly as compared to their monolingual peers (Diamond, 2010). However, these scientific data are not precise as the researchers did not take into consideration crucial factors such as education and family socioeconomic status. In later studies these two factors were taken into account and, as a consequence, it emerged that monolingual and bilingual children have similar cognitive results. For instance, Serratrice (2013) shares that the study, aimed at comparison of bilinguals’ and multilinguals’ ability to discriminate languages, showed that bilinguals obtained the same results as monolinguals. After seeing this evidence, there is no way we cannot agree with Grosjean.

The fourth drawback is that an accidental contact of two languages is seen as strange and unusual. Languages are supposed to work separately and not to cross with each other.

The fifth negative effect is that studies on bilingualism are conducted under the monolingual policies. The linguists still use tests applicable to monolingualism. To my mind, the second and the fifth effects, mentioned by Grosjean, are the same.

The last negative consequence is negative attitude of bilingual individuals towards their linguistic competencies. Often, they see their ability to use two language from the negative side, because one language is weaker than another, and they are ashamed of it.

In this context, it is worthwhile to consider the inadequacy of the monolingual view on bilingualism, as Grosjean demonstrated valid arguments that do not speak in favour of the *monolingual view*.

To sum up, the crucial difference *the monolingual view* and *the holistic view* is that a person, supporting a holistic view, will not compare the language proficiency of a monolingual learner with the language proficiency of a bilingual learner; the results of bilinguals should not be measured by results of monolinguals. Cook (1992) stated that the assessment of language competences of bilinguals should be context-dependent (as cited in Baker, 2001).

In this paragraph we will review another definition of individual bilingualism. From the dimension of the relationships between language proficiencies in two languages, individual bilingualism can be defined as *balanced/unbalanced* (or *dominant*). The term '*balanced bilingualism*' was first introduced in 1959 by Lambert et al. (as cited in Chin & Wigglesworth). '*Balanced*' *bilingualism* is about equal proficiency in two languages, i.e. a person speaks English and German perfectly in all settings. To my mind, this typology (*balanced/unbalanced*) could be related to the *monolingual (fractional) view* of bilingualism.

While scholars such as Lambert were discussing that balanced bilingualism must be accepted by the linguistic community as a real phenomenon, other scholars such as Beardsmore, Fishman and Grosjean offered a divergent perspective. Baetens Beardsmore (1982) argued that the phenomenon of balanced bilingualism is almost unreal in linguistic reality. Fishman (1972) supported this statement by saying that bilinguals do not possess the same fluency in both languages. Grosjean (1982), for his part, wrote that not a lot of bilinguals work as professional interpreters and translators. It is complicated to imagine a person whose linguistic competences are equally developed in both languages. One language will still be dominant in the brain, consequently, balanced bilingualism is rather an idealized concept. It would be impossible to reach a balance in two languages. The second problem with the concept '*balanced bilingualism*' raises when we are talking about language functions. Every language fulfils a distinct function in society, consequently, bilingualism is based on fulfilling different functions by means of different languages. According to Fishman (1979), if the speaker is able to use both languages

in all possible contexts equally, bilingualism will stop existing (as cited in Chin & Wigglesworth, 2007).

### **3. Changing perspectives on the border of two centuries**

#### **3.1. Bilingualism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

To trace the changes of representations of bilingualism, we aim to take into account ideologies that participated in the formation of views on bilingualism. Bilingualism in the 20th century is characterized by the prevalence of monoglossic ideologies. People who adopt monoglossic ideologies, see bilingualism as the sum of two separate languages (García, 2013). A range of researchers of the 20th century presented languages as autonomous and distinct systems. (Worthy et al., 2013). It means that if a person is bilingual, the first language will be designated as L1, and the second language as L2, and they will not intersect. To visualise this perspective, García (2009b) expressed the concern that bilingualism in the 20th century is “a bicycle with two full separate wheels” (as cited in García 2013). In this case, two separate wheels are two separate languages. Two linguistic concepts of the 20th century draw on monoglossic ideologies: diglossia and additive and subtractive bilingualism (García, 2013). We will try to review these concepts in the next paragraph.

The concept of *diglossia* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is interpreted as the *bilingualism of communities*. The definition of *diglossia* was first formed by Ferguson in 1959 and then reconstructed in 1967 by Fishman. According to Fishman, the stable bilingualism of social communities is possible only in case if every language has a *special purpose* in a *special context*. Some languages possess ‘high’ status whereas other languages are not so prestigious and possess ‘low’ status in the social community (García, 2013). For instance, a language, used during personal communicative situations by members of one social community, is designated as ‘low’, and a language, used in governmental institutions and organisations, is designated as ‘high’. However, in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the concept of *diglossia* has been criticized by Vertovec: in our age of superdiversity and globalisation such a strict opposition is too simple (as cited in Horner, 2018).

The second concept, drawing on monoglossic ideologies, is additive/subtractive bilingualism. Having taken into account the sociolinguistic perspective, William Lambert (1974) distinguished two types of bilingualism – *additive bilingualism* and *subtractive bilingualism* (as cited in Hakuta, 1992). As a dimension Lambert of the effect of L2 learning on the retention of L2. According to Lambert (1974), subtractive bilingualism is usually experienced in language minority groups, because the home language of minority groups is

subtracted by the school language:  $L1 + L2 - L1 + L2$  (as cited in García, Flores & Chu, 2011). Additive bilingualism characterizes majority groups because they learn school language in addition to their home language:  $L1 + L2 = L1 + L2$ . García (2009b) argued that subtracted and additive models of bilingualism are no longer applicable to our modern linguistic reality, as in the context of superdiversity the theory of Lambert is no longer relevant. Her first argument was that the additive bilingualism is nothing but the model of *double monolingualism*. Her second argument was that both models imply the model of monolingualism, because one language is named as first, and another language is named as second. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the concepts of a first and a second language sound odd and non-relevant.

### **3.2. Bilingualism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

In the modern world, heteroglossic ideologies increased their influence due to several factors, and globalization takes a leading position among them. Because of high demand for English as for the language of international communication, almost every country of the European Union is bilingual, as children start learning English at an early age.

Seeing bilingualism as a sum of two separate languages lost its relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Under the influence of new technologies bilingualism became widespread. People got more opportunities to travel the world, and the necessity to learn foreign languages arose. Old conceptions of bilingualism stopped corresponding to the modern linguistic reality. Applied linguists realised that *monoglossic language ideologies* limit language practices of bilinguals. A new wave of theoretical assumptions on bilingualism rose. Countering the old-fashioned understanding of bilingualism as a duality was undertaken by García in a series of her works. Two concepts of the dual monoglossia that prevailed in the 20th century were challenged by her: *diglossia* and *additive/subtractive* bilingualism, discussed in the previous chapter.

To correspond to the new reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, García (2009b) proposed two new models of bilingualism: *recursive* and *dynamic*. *Recursive* and *dynamic* models go beyond the traditional perspective of perceiving bilingualism as a set of two autonomous languages. In a recursive model, representatives of minority languages try to restore their language by attending bilingual schools. At this moment, the process of recursion is taking place, because minority representatives try to collect pieces of information they lost in the past.

While the previous paragraph focused on new models of bilingualism, the following one reveals pedagogies formed under the influence of heteroglossic ideologies. Plurilingual heteroglossic pedagogies are suggested by García, and sometimes they are embedded in the structure of bilingual classes. These plurilingual pedagogies do not look at languages as at

separate systems, because they are not in the context of monoglossic ideologies. Instead of it, languages are perceived as a part of one linguistic repertoire.

One of these plurilingual pedagogies is *translanguaging*. Despite the fact that the theory of translanguaging is quite recent and continues to gain momentum, it already received some criticism. Duarte (2018) states that criticism to translanguaging-based approaches involves an indication of the absence of empirical basis in relation to the effectiveness of these approaches in the educational context. In part, this is due to the lack of state support, as the government rarely finances such practices (García, 2009b). However, these pedagogies are relatively recent in the linguistic area, and educators and policy makers need time to detach themselves from classical monoglossic ideologies. We need to refuse the concept of balanced bilingualism and adopt bilingualism to Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe (2000), where plurilingualism is defined as ‘the ability to use several languages to varying degrees and for distinct purposes’ (as cited in García, 2009).

## 4. Conclusions

To conclude, bilingualism is a developing multidimensional concept; a lot of researchers tried to create a typology of bilingualism and define it precisely, but there is not a precise definition at the present time, as everyone interprets this concept in a different way and according to different criteria.

During our discussion we have tried to clarify such concepts as additive and subtractive bilingualism, recursive and dynamic bilingualism and their perceptions by researchers in the reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We established the connection between ideologies and changes of views on bilingualism from the ideological and cognitive aspects. This essay has addressed a number of significant issues which show that history of bilingualism entails a long period of the prevalence of monoglossic ideologies, however, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterised by the shift from monoglossic to heteroglossic ideologies. Time to get rid of old-fashioned monolingual glasses has come, and the researchers, e.g. García made an attempt to change the perspectives on bilingualism to comply with today's reality. Furthermore, from a theoretical point of view, the focus has now shifted from balanced 'two-wheeled' bilingualism to dynamic bilingualism. Heteroglossic ideologies created spaces for recursive and dynamic models of bilingualism. However, plurilingual heteroglossic pedagogies, being an opposition to entrenched standard monoglossic pedagogies, did not achieve a desirable status quo in most of the European schools yet. There is a necessity to continue research on the effectiveness of plurilingual heteroglossic pedagogies such as translanguaging in the bilingual classes in order to persuade educational policy makers to apply these pedagogies across the board. Currently, it is impossible to predict if heteroglossic bilingual pedagogies will be soon securely embedded in education. This remains a big challenge in the heteroglossic world.

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