

# LIGN177: Multilingualism

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Multilingual acquisition

## L2 Lexical learning

- Vivian Umbel's studies of L1 Spanish-L2 English in Miami 1<sup>st</sup> graders
- Acquisition of L2 does not affect L1 vocabulary
- Bilinguals (E/S in home) and L2 English learners (S in home) did not meet monolingual English standards
- Bilinguals outperformed L2 English learners
- Strategies that L2 children use:
  - Non-specific verbs and nouns – 'thing' 'go'
  - Sound-symbolism – 'plosh' for 'dive'

## L2 Lexical learning

- *L2 lexical learning builds up gradually and on conceptual experience of L1*
- Is L2 lexical learning faster than L1 lexical learning?
- Johanne Paradis' study of French/English bilinguals: 24 children with L2 English
  - Rate of vocabulary growth was similar to L1 acquisition
  - But, individual differences – some children show high rates of increase and older children are faster than younger

## L2 Morphosyntax

- Paradis study showed errors primarily with grammatical morphology, not necessarily connected to L1 transfer
- L2 'interlanguage' involves omission of tense suffixes (-ing, -s, -ed)
- Errors similar to L1 acquisition of English:
  - I didn't sawed, he want some
- Errors similar to children at same age with L1 language impairment

## Individual differences

- L2 learning is in a more varied context than L1 learning
- Factors that can influence it:
  - Motivation
  - Aptitude
  - Personality
  - L1 characteristics
  - Age of acquisition
  - Socio-Economic Status
  - Quality of second language input

## Comparison with monolinguals

- Children take approx. 5 years to perform at level of monolinguals
- Depends on task
- But perhaps bilinguals always perform differently than monolinguals – slight pronunciation differences, processing differences

## Multilingual or L3 acquisition

- Less likely to find balanced multilingual than bilingual
- Multilinguals have more specific functions and contexts for each language
- Issues in L3 acquisition
  - 1. Whether L2 aids in L3 acquisition
  - 2. Cross-linguistic influence

## L1-L2-L3

- Children can acquire three languages in childhood
- One parent, one language + 1 community language
- Two parents, one language + 2 community languages

## Childhood multilingualism

- Few studies conducted on multilingual children and acquisition patterns
- Most studies focus on adults learning a 3<sup>rd</sup> language in formal setting

## Benefits of bilingualism

- General positive effects of bilingualism on the acquisition of L3 have been reported, and in multiple domains (perception, comprehension, lexical tests)
- No effects of bilingualism have also been reported

## Cross-linguistic influence

- If languages are similar (phonetically, vocabulary, syntax), transfer effects are observed
- Ex. Turkish L1, Dutch L2 → build on Dutch L2 to assist with English L3
- Typological similarity outweighs L1 influence

## Cross-linguistic influence

- L1 literacy and positive L1 learning experience has strong correlation with L2 development – does this extend to L3?
- Context of acquisition – school settings do seem to help, but little studies of oral, informal, acquisition have been conducted

## Additive vs. subtractive

- Additive multilingualism occurs when a L2 or L3 is added, but the L1 is still used and valued
- Subtractive multilingualism occurs when a L2 or L3 is added, and the L1 (or L2) is replaced
- Subtractive context - socially-dominant community languages replacing home languages
- Additive bilingualism – more benefits for L2

## Tremblay (2006)

- Tremblay, Marie-Claude (2006). Cross-linguistic influence in Third Language Acquisition: The Role of L2 Proficiency and L2 Exposure. *Cahiers linguistiques d'Ottawa* 34:109-119.
- Study of acquisition of L3 German by L1/L2 English/French
- *Is there cross-linguistic interference and how does it relate to proficiency in L2?*
- Study of lexical 'inventions' (translations, false cognates, blends) and lexical shifts

## Tremblay (2006)

- Results
- Lexical innovations/shift rate from L1 was 33% for high L2 proficiency, 54% for low L2 proficiency; no difference for exposure
- Lexical innovation/shift rate from L2 was 3.5% for high L2 proficiency, 1% for low L2
- Higher proficiency in L2 French, lower the influence from L1 English on L3 German

## Leung (2005)

- Leung, Yan-Kit Ingrid. 2005. L2 vs. L3 initial state: a comparative study of the acquisition of French DPs by Vietnamese monolinguals and Cantonese-English bilinguals. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition* 8:39-61.
- Study of acquisition of French noun phrases by L1 Vietnamese (in Montreal) and L1 Cantonese/L2 English bilinguals (in Hong Kong)
- Vietnamese and Cantonese lack articles ('the', 'a') and plural marking
- Classifiers are used instead, which may be definite or indefinite

## Leung (2005) Results

- *Strong transfer* of L1 into L2 French for the Vietnamese monolinguals
- High error rate with articles; had default singular
- *Partial transfer* of L2 into L3 for the Cantonese-English bilinguals
- Performed well on definite article usage; some issues with Adj-N placement
- → Proficiency in English helped with French

## Cognitive advantages?

- Nayak's research suggests that multilinguals use superior processing and learning strategies
- Flexibility in matching strategies to task
- Implicit learning strategies (exposure leads to learning, not explicit instruction)