Multilingual acquisition

L2 Lexical learning

- Vivian Umbel's studies of L1 Spanish-L2 English in Miami 1st 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 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 3rd 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)

- 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

Leung (2005)

- Study of acquisition of French noun phrases by L1 Vietnamese (in Montreal) and L1Cantonese/L2English 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

Tremblay (2006) Results

- 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

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)