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幼児の二言語習得：定説をくつがえす

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Simultaneous Bilingualism: Dispelling of Myths

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要 旨 二言語を併用する子供の親は、生後まもなく、彼らの子供が二言語体験することに消極的である。

なぜならば二言語を併用する子供は、単一言語を使う子供と比べて自然に言語習得できないかもしれないと懸念するからである。更に二言語を併用する子供は、どちらの言語においてもネイティブスピーカーのレベルに熟達できないかもしれないと心配することである。

この考えは、一般にセミリンガリズムと呼ばれている。このセミリンガリズムについて1927年にブルームフィールドは北米のインディアンの言語における分析において以下のように記述している。

およそ40歳の北米インディアン、ホワイトサンダーは英語より彼のインディアンの言語であるメノミニをより多く話すが、そのメノミニですら語彙が乏しく、文法的規則性がなく、なおかつ、彼は単純な文章でしか会話ができないというお粗末なものである。つまり彼はまともに言葉を話せないというのである。

この例におけるセミリンガリズムへの影響という点で、言語学者達は少なくとも一つの言語においてネイティブレベルの言語能力を確実なものにするには、第二言語を経験させる以前に、しっかりした第一言語の能力を習得しなければならないと忠告する。

これに対して、この論文は二言語を同時に体験することが、子供の言語習得にマイナスな影響を及ぼすことはなく、二言語を同時に使う子供の養育は、それ自体がセミリンガリズムの原因にならないということを説いている。むしろセミリンガリズムの原因は経済的、政治的、社会的条件によるものであると論じ、二言語体験が遅ければ、遅いほど子供の第二言語における言語熟達の可能性は低くなるかもしれないと説明している。

Introduction

Early studies of bilingualism led researchers to create the myth that bilingualism was the cause of lowered intelligence. One study published in 1926 (F. Goodenough) even went so far as to say that 'the use of a foreign language in the home is one of the chief factors in producing mental retardation.' Jespersen (1922: 148) summarized the disadvantages of bilingualism as follows:

It is, of course, an advantage for a child to be familiar with two languages: but without doubt the advantage may be, and generally is, purchased too dear. First of all the child in question hardly learns either of the two languages as perfectly as he would have done if he had limited himself to one. It may seem on the surface, as if he talked just like a native, but he does not really command the fine points of the language. . . . Secondly, the brain effort required to master the two languages instead of one certainly diminishes the child's power of learning other things which might and ought to be learnt.

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Many of the early studies were conducted in the United States during the early 1900's, a time when immigrants from Europe were flooding into the country and causing great social unrest. Most of the conclusions drawn from them have long been dismissed on the grounds of unscientific or flawed experimental procedures, ignorance, and prejudice. Intelligence tests of the time weighed heavily against individuals of non-white, non-English-speaking, non-European backgrounds. Intelligence was measured in terms of competence in English – the more proficient one's English skills, the higher one's measured intelligence. Later research, roughly between 1930 and 1960, revealed essentially no relationship between bilingualism and intelligence as the controlling of age, sex, and social-class differences became standard procedures.

It was not until the early 1960s, however, that studies began to show a positive relationship between bilingualism and intelligence. A now famous study was conducted in Montreal in 1962 by Peal and Lambert (1962: 76, 1–23) in which all relevant variables were strictly controlled. All of the subjects were 10 years old, all came from middle-class families, and all the bilingual children were equally proficient in French and English. The bilingual children outperformed their monolingual counterparts on both verbal and non-verbal intelligence tests and the authors concluded that the bilingual child had 'mental flexibility', a superiority in concept formation and a more diversified set of mental abilities. They were unable to determine, however, whether bilingualism aided one's intellectual development or whether the more intelligent child became bilingual. Although Peal and Lambert's study is inconclusive, it did lead to many other studies which support a positive relationship between bilingualism and intelligence.

The Simultaneous Bilingual Approach

Bilingual acquisition may be achieved in a number of ways. Children may acquire two languages more or less simultaneously, or they may acquire a second language after the first language has been established, i.e. consecutively or successively. McLaughlin (1978) suggests, though admittedly arbitrarily, that acquisition of more than one language up to age 3 should be considered simultaneous. Padilla and Lindholm (1984) maintain that only when a child has been exposed to two languages from birth onward should the term simultaneous acquisition be used. For my purpose I shall adopt Padilla's and Lindholm's definition of simultaneous bilingual acquisition.

In very general terms, research indicates that the developmental sequence of bilinguals who have acquired their languages simultaneously follows essentially the same pattern as that of monolinguals, i.e. an initial babbling stage, followed by the one word stage, the two word stage, the multiword stage, and the multclause stage. Recent research into first language acquisition also reveals that a child's receptive language skills begin to develop in very early infancy. This has prompted many language specialists to recommend that bilingual upbringing should begin from birth. Similarly, the process involved in producing the first speech sounds in the child's holophrastic stage follows the same basic route in young bilinguals as it does in monolinguals. Because the task involved is obviously complicated by the fact that two sound systems are involved, this larger cognitive de-

mand may lead to a delayed onset of speech production. An initial period of some confusion may also exist. However, the absence of sound confusion has been documented more often than its presence. Although the early stages of phonological development are contingent on a number of factors, ‘bilinguals are probably least different from monolinguals early in the one-word utterance stage’ (Watson, 1991). The widespread impression that the bilingual child’s first words will be delayed in comparison with the monolingual child are largely unfounded. In a study in which mothers were asked to note their child’s ‘first word’, children being raised bilingually averaged 11.2 months compared to the monolingual children’s average of 12 months (Doyle, Champagne and Segalowitz, 1978). Perhaps a more reliable measure is the fact that both monolinguals and bilinguals begin by producing words containing sounds that are simpler to articulate (/p/, /b/, /d/, /f/, /m/, /n/), leaving the more difficult sounds such as /tʃ/, /dʒ/, /fr/, /st/, as well as the diphthongs for later. Neither have major delays been observed of bilingual children producing two word and multiple word utterances as compared to monolingual children. Despite unequal progress in the two languages, most data show that in each age category vocabulary development of young bilinguals, in at least one language, compares favourably with the development of monolingual children. Moreover, there is agreement in the literature that young bilinguals have the facility to function in two languages simultaneously, without taking any significantly longer than monolingual children do to acquire one.

The widespread assumption that linguistic confusion and interference is an inevitable consequence of a simultaneous bilingual upbringing has prompted some experts to recommend a consecutive bilingual approach. Although it has been established that some mixing at the lexical level occurs during the early stages of language development of bilinguals, the extent of such mixing is an issue of contention. In fact, different studies have reported very different rates of mixing. However, there is a general consensus in the literature that mixed utterances appear more frequently in the early stages and decline gradually with ages. Vihman (1982), for example, reported a steady diminishing in the proportion of mixed utterances by her Estonian/English bilingual son from a rate of 34 per cent at age 1 : 8 to just 4 per cent at 2 : 0. Balkan’s (1970) study of French/English Swiss bilingual adolescents between the ages of 11 and 16 indicates that early child bilingualism may have some advantages over bilingualism which develops later in childhood or adolescence. He found that those who had become bilingual before age 4 were markedly superior not only to monolinguals but also significantly better than the bilinguals who had acquired their second language after the age of 4.

The Notion of Semilingualism

Hansegård (1968) referred to the less than complete linguistic skills of Finnish/Swedish bilinguals in Tornedal, Sweden as ‘halvspråkighet’. He characterized the extent of their bilingualism (1968: 128) as follows: ‘et halvt behärskande av svenskan och ett halvt behärskande av modersmålet’ [a half knowledge of Swedish and a half knowledge of the mother tongue]. Han-

segård (1975; see Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981) defined semilingualism in terms of linguistic deficit in the following six areas of language, placing particular emphasis on the final three:

1. size of the repertoire of words, phrases understood or actively available in speech;
2. linguistic correctness, i.e. the ability to understand correctly and to realize in a speech act elements of language such as phonemes, suffixes etc.;
3. degree of automatism, i.e. the extent to which understanding and active use of a language takes place without conscious deliberation;
4. ability to create or neologize;
5. mastery of the cognitive, emotive and volitional function of language;
6. richness or poorness in individual meanings, i.e. whether reading or listening to a particular linguistic system evokes lively and reverberating images or not.

Hansegård (1975: 8) profiles a semilingual individual as one who shows quantitative deficiencies, e.g. smaller vocabulary, compared with monolinguals who are of the same social group and educational background. In addition, the semilingual can be expected to deviate from the norm in the two languages and has a lower degree of automatism. Such an individual also finds it very difficult to express emotional meanings.

Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukoma (1976) use the term 'semilingualism' to describe the child who does not attain monolingual proficiency in literacy skills in any language and might be incapable of developing his full linguistic potential. They define semilingualism as a linguistic handicap which prevents the individual from acquiring the linguistic skills appropriate to his linguistic potential in any of his languages. One who is semilingual may appear to be superficially fluent, that is to say, very competent in ordinary situations, but lacking in the knowledge of the structure of both languages.

Although Hansegård is credited with defining semilingualism and others such as Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukoma have put forward more simplified definitions, the notion behind it is implicitly stated in Bloomfield's profile of White Thunder and in Jespersen's observation (see above). Jespersen also invokes a limited capacity model of human intellectual functioning, which I will address later.

The notion of semilingualism has been criticized by a number of researchers (see Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981). Seven major problems will be outlined below. First, the term has taken on pejorative overtones, particularly in Scandinavia and with immigrant groups in the United States. Cummins (1979: 228) supported the notion in his earlier work by noting: 'There is strong evidence that some groups of minority language and migrant children are characterized by "semilingualism", i.e. less than native-like skills in both languages with its detrimental cognitive and academic consequences.' Although the term has since become widely used in discussion about bilingualism in Canada, Cummins has disassociated himself from the notion of semilingualism because of the pejorative connotations it implies (see Cummins and Swain, 1983: 31 and Edelsky et al., 1983). Just as the term

'immigrant' may conjure up expectations of underachievement, so too may the notion of semilingualism which, in turn, could evoke a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy.

Second, the educational tests used to measure language proficiency are quantitative in nature and may measure only a small unrepresentative sample of one's total language behavior. The 'linguistic deficit' associated with semilingualism is measured only by comparison with standardized norms obtained through traditional psychometric tests and academic results (Brent-Palmer, 1979).

Third, establishing clear and unambiguous criteria for determining who is and who is not a semilingual will be arbitrary and value laden. The notion is ill-defined; 'linguistic potential' and 'half knowledge' are not explained. Furthermore, it could be argued that the definition of semilingual falls within the spectrum of bilingualism, a term which in itself is ill-defined. Let me illustrate the confusion.

One extreme definition of being bilingual means being able to speak two languages perfectly. Bloomfield (1935) defines bilingualism as 'the native-like control of two languages' (p. 56). On the other end of the spectrum is the definition proposed by Macnamara (1967) that a bilingual is anyone who possesses a minimal competence in one of the four language skills. The sociolinguist Uriel Weinreich defined bilingualism simply as the alternate use of two languages (1953). In general, earlier definitions of bilingualism encompassed the notion of equal mastery of two languages, while later ones have allowed much greater variation in competence. The question, then, is one of degree. Further complicating this matter of degree, of where to draw the line across one general language, is the problem of how to deal with the many more basic skills of ability (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and their subdivisions. Weinreich (1953) suggests that there are at least twenty dimensions of language which could or should be assessed in order to determine bilingual proficiency.

Definitions of bilingualism lack precision and operationalism on the one hand. They fail to adequately specify what is meant by native-like competence, which can vary tremendously within a single unilingual community, nor by minimal proficiency in a second language. On the other hand, previous attempts at defining bilingualism have focused solely on the linguistic aspects of language, thus ignoring non-linguistic dimensions.

There even remains confusion as to what term ought to be applied to those individuals who possess great bilingual capacities. Such individuals have been referred to in the literature as 'balanced bilinguals', 'ambilinguals', or 'equilinguals'. Beardsmore (1986) has described the ambilingual as a person who, in all contexts, can function equally well in either language and who shows no trace of A when using B, and vice versa. However, given that such individuals constitute a very rare breed indeed, the term 'balanced bilingual' (or 'equilingual') is now generally used to describe one whose mastery of the languages is more roughly equivalent. Thus, it is possible for a person to be both a semilingual and a balanced bilingual concurrently if one allowed that two 'incomplete' fluencies were matched. Jaakkola (1973: 21) for example, in speaking of the complementary functions of languages in a diglossic relationship, even goes so far as to suggest that instead of bilingualism we

should speak of semilingualism.

Fourth, it has been suggested that code-switching may lead to semilingualism. Di Pietro (1977) defines code-switching as 'the use of more than one language by communicants in the execution of a speech act.' Valdes Fallis (1976) refers to it simply as 'the alternation between two languages.' while Scotton and Ury (1977) suggest that 'code-switching is the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction.' For my purpose I will define code-switching as the alternate use of two or more languages in accordance with the purpose, the event, or the interlocutor.

Code-switching is an extremely common and natural characteristic of bilingual speech behavior. Mackey (1968: 554) suggests that bilingualism is not a phenomenon of language but of its use. It could be argued, then, that the study of bilingualism falls within the realm of sociolinguistics in so far as the latter is concerned with the way language is used in society. Competence ought not to be measured in purely linguistic terms. Competence may encompass a range of skills, some of which may be more developed than others, in a number of languages and varieties. The fact that bilingual (or multilingual) speakers choose to use different languages or varieties in different situations demonstrates that not all languages or varieties are equally appropriate or adequate for use in all speech events.

Monolinguals have long held a very negative attitude toward code-switching, viewing it as a grammarless mixture of two languages which bastardizes the monolingual's own rule-governed language. Bilinguals also differ among themselves in their attitude to code-switching, both their own and other people's. Some have no reservations about code-switching whenever the situation presents itself. Others consider that code-switching is a linguistic impurity or a sign of laziness and should be avoided. The latter group is also likely to be intolerant of their bilingual interlocutor's code-switching. Despite the strong negative attitudes towards code-switching, there is little if any evidence to suggest that it leads to semilingualism.

Fifth, the comparison of semilingualism with monolingualism may not be a fair one. It has not been established if bilinguals are qualitatively and quantitatively different from monolinguals in their use of their two languages as a function of being bilingual. Before any statement about the bilingual's (or semilingual's) efficiency or inefficiency as a communicator, as compared to the monolingual, one must examine the overall, collective use of the two languages and not just the use of one or the other language in isolation.

Sixth, semilingualism is associated with the common metaphor of some 'containerized' competence for language and skills. Figure 1 below shows a modified form of Skutnabb-Kangas' (1981: 26) diagram which Martin-Jones and Romaine (1985: 32, Figure 2) have called 'the container view of competence.' The diagram shows some of the ways in which the term semilingualism might be applied. The ideal monolingual adult has a 'full container', while the ideal monolingual child's container is only 'partially full', presumably because his or her competence has not yet fully 'matured'. The ideal bilingual adult has two full containers, each equal to that of the ideal monolingual. The ideal bilingual child has two partially, but equally full containers, meaning that the child is develop-

ing equal proficiency in two languages. In comparison, the semilingual adult has not acquired sufficient knowledge of either of his or her languages. The semilingual child's containers are even less full. We see here a return to the confusion surrounding balanced bilingualism. The semilingual (the term 'double semilingualism' has also be used to describe those with less than adequate competence in more than one language) depicted in figure 1 (e) and (f) could be a balanced bilingual if he or she had an equal, albeit deficient, control of two languages.

The container metaphor has long anchored the conceptualization of human intellectual capacities. Many nineteenth century scientists applied the metaphor to craniometry axioms that linked brain size to intelligence. Craniometry was based on the myth that a measure of what filled the cranial space revealed something about the worth or the contents. The work of the anthropologist Boas (1899), did much to dispel this myth by showing that cranial indices varied considerably among adults of a single group and within the life of individuals. Although some finite-capacity model does likely exist, all that we now know about intellectual structures and functions would suggest that the capacity for knowledge, be it of languages or otherwise, is large enough that we need not worry about exceeding our limits.

Seventh, if languages are relatively underdeveloped, the cause may not be attributable to bilingualism per se, but to economic, political, and social conditions. Skutnabb-Kangas (1979: 224) observed a child in a Swedish day care centre and described his linguistic abilities as follows:

He couldn't count to more than three in any language, after that he said: many. He didn't know the names of any colours in any language. He didn't know the names of most of the things around him, either at the day care centre or outside (I often took him out and downtown for walks) in any language. In Finnish he used only present tense, in Swedish present and past. Instead of the person inflection in Finnish he often used the infinitive form. Finnish has fifteen cases, and usually children master the 11 most common of

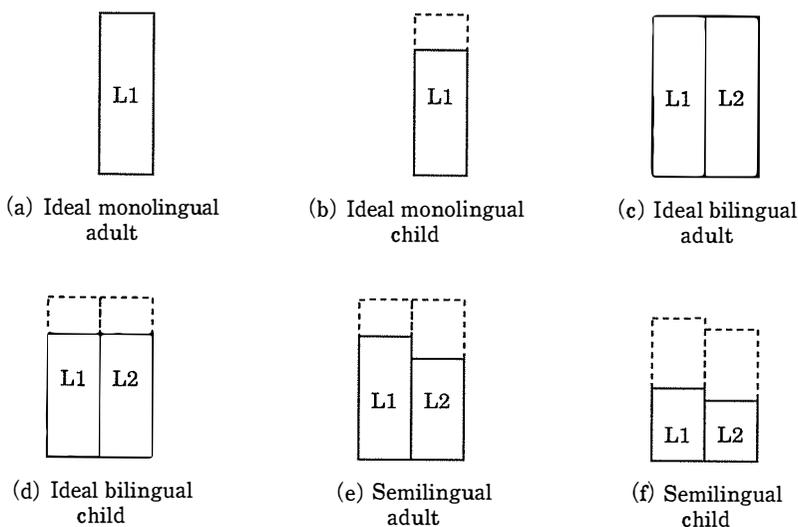


Figure 1 The 'container' view of competence

them, around the age of three. He used only 6 of them, which meant that he for instance was unable to say that something was on something, or that somebody was going to a place or coming from a place.

Skutnabb-Kangas maintained that the boy was only one of approximately five million immigrant children in industrialized Western European countries who should be considered semilingual. The children she is referring to are not from middle- or upper-class families, but rather lower-class immigrant families. In other words, their bilingual experience cannot be described as 'additive' but 'subtractive'. Before going any further, an explanation of these two terms is in order.

The term 'additive bilinguality' and 'subtractive bilinguality' were first introduced by Lambert (1974). According to whether the two languages are socially valued in the child's environment, the child will develop different forms of bilinguality. If the two languages are both socially valued the child's cognitive development will be enhanced by the bilingual experience. The resulting form of bilingualism is termed 'additive' in that the bilingual is adding a second socially relevant language to his bank of skills at no additional cost to his L1 competence. On the other hand, if the socio-cultural context of the child's environment devalues the child's L1, the child's cognitive development relative to that of a monolingual peer may be delayed and, in extreme cases, the child may not be able to make up for this delay. This resulting form of bilingualism is called 'subtractive' in that the child's L1 is likely to reflect some stage in the 'subtraction' of L1 and its replacement by L2. Consequently, many children who experience a 'subtractive' form of bilingualism are often characterized as having less than native-like competence in both languages. The majority of studies reporting successful bilingual acquisition have involved bilinguals whose L1 was dominant and prestigious and in no danger of being replaced by the L2. In contrast, many of the studies revealing negative consequences as a result of exposure to two languages involved bilingual children from minority language groups whose L1 was gradually being replaced by a more prestigious L2.

The notion of semilingualism de-emphasizes social factors, as well as economic and political factors. Brent-Palmer (1979) argues that it expresses middle-class bias that does not reflect the sociolinguistic realities of lower-class minority-language children. Stroud (1978) says that it implies conformity to norms implicit in standard language use, i.e., the language of the school and academic and social advancement. It would seem that the term semilingualism is wrongly and unfairly associated with individual bilingualism where societal bilingualism is squarely to blame. It is more a political statement than a linguistic concept.

Delaying the Bilingual Experience

Parents who attempt to control the age at which their child's bilingual experience begins, on the assumption that it may be too confusing, demanding, or dangerous to expose the child to two languages from the start, often fail to obtain the desired result. The reasons for this failure are not always surprising. Take, for example, a situation where: 1) the parents have different native languages with each having some degree of competence in the other's language; 2) the language of the

mother is the dominant language of the community; and 3) the parents both address the child in the dominant language of the community for, say, the first three years. Consecutive bilingualism may be less successful than a simultaneous bilingual experience for several reasons. First, there is a good possibility that a delayed bilingual experience will result in inferior pronunciation in the child's L2. Second, it may be very difficult for the father to switch back to his L1, particularly if he is highly proficient in his L2. He may also find it extremely frustrating to have to rely on a multitude of nonverbal, gestural cues, not to mention ingenuity and creativity, and a non-reliance on the other language. Third, the child is likely to tune out of the language he or she does not know, possibly leading to the frustration factor referred to above or the counterproductive strategy of translation. Fourth, knowing that the father speaks the child's L1, the child is likely to lack motivation to learn the second language. Fifth, through the use of the dominant language over a lengthy period of time, the linguistic pull of that language may be impossible to overcome. The challenge of countering the external sociolinguistic forces that promote the use of the majority language is a daunting one indeed.

Conclusion

In this paper I have presented evidence which suggests that the simultaneous bilingualism approach does not have a negative effect on language acquisition and may even have advantages over bilingualism which develops later in childhood. As for the notion of semilingualism, I have pointed out six major problems which are associated with it. From these, no conclusion can be drawn as to the existence of a linguistic/cognitive deficit; rather there is enough counterevidence to suggest that sociocultural, economic and politically-driven factors are responsible for poor normative linguistic achievement. There is nothing in the research which indicates that the simultaneous bilingual approach per se may increase the risk of semilingualism. Finally, I have suggested, by example, a scenario in which a delay in the bilingual experience may be detrimental to the child's acquisition of a second language.

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