

## A sampling of topics in Bilingualism & L2 acquisition

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## Some terminology

- **Balanced bilingualism**
  - equal proficiency in two languages
- **Nonbalanced bilingualism**
  - higher level of proficiency in one language
- **Simultaneous acquisition**
  - Development of two languages prior to age 3
- **Successive acquisition**
  - Development of one language (L1) first and another later (L2)

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## Issue 1: code-switching

- A speech style in which fluent bilinguals move in and out of two (or more) languages
  - Ex: The students *habian visto la pelicula italiana*  
(the students had seen the italian movie)
- Different from borrowing
  - Ex: *Va a imeilear a su vecino.*  
(She's going to e-mail her neighbor.)

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### Possible reasons for code-switching

- To fill in a lexical/semantic gap
- Compensating for an inability to express himself or herself in one language
- Expressing solidarity with a particular social group

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### Code-switching is rule-governed

- Does not occur at all possible boundaries

The students *habian visto la pelicula italiana*  
the students had seen the Italian movie

\* The students had *visto la pelicula italiana*  
the student had seen the Italian movie

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### Constraints on code-switching

- Equivalence constraint
- Free morpheme constraint

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### Examples of equivalence constraint

- You're almost done with school, verdad?
- Es muy cute.
- That's the lady que tiene cuatro hijos.
- \*El niño le hit.
- \*El jefe no want to pay us.

A. Eng. I | told him | that | so that | he | would bring it | fast.  
B. Sp. (Yo) | le dije | eso | pa' que | (él) | la trajera | ligero.  
C. CS I | told him | that | pa' que | | la trajera | ligero.

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### Examples of free morpheme constraint

- \*Estaba runeando in the library.  
*She was running in the library.*
- \*No hay mal que por good no venga.  
*There is no bad that some good does not come of it.*
- Frequently violated by children <10 years of age

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### Two other constraints?

- Subject pronoun + verb constraint  
– \*Yo went to the store. (*I went to the store.*)
- Verb + infinitive complement constraint  
– \*El perro no quiere eat his food.  
(*The dog doesn't want to eat his food.*)

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## Issue 2: One lexicon or two?

- All languages share the same linguistic principles and thus the underlying brain areas that process & represent this information must be common
- Each language is stored and processed separately and is independent of other languages spoken

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## Data

- Bilingual aphasia
  - Majority of the time, damage is to both languages
  - But the damage is not always equal.
- Lexical competition across languages, using noncognate homographs
  - Ex: *four*, *pain* in French vs. English; *red* in Spanish vs. English
  - Frequency effects are language specific
  - But priming is not
- Naming performance

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## Simultaneous acquisition

- Rate and manner of development of languages appear similar in bilingual and monolingual children
- Initial language mixing, followed by slow separation?
  - Three stages
  - Arguments against this - Language mode (later slide)

From Grosjean, 1982; Owens, 2001

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### Successive acquisition

- Much more common
- Not necessarily faster than adults at learning L2, but endpoint is better

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### Issue 3: How to predict success in sequential acquisition?

- Are there factors about the individual that makes them better or worse at learning L2?
- Are there factors of the type of teaching that results in better outcomes?

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### Are these issues/divisions simplistic?

- Complementary Principle
  - Because bilinguals generally acquire and use their different languages in different domains of life, it may not be appropriate to compare performance to monolinguals.
- Language Mode
  - The state of activation of the bilingual's language & language processing mechanisms at a particular point in time

From interview with Grosjean, 2002

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