

Bilingualism

Bilingualism is the use of at least two languages by an individual or by a community of speakers. The initial step in any linguistic study project, especially sociolinguistic and language contact studies, is to identify the various types of bilingualism and bilinguals and their distinguishing traits.

1. Bilingualism Definition

A bilingual individual speaks at least two languages with some proficiency. Although a bilingual is commonly defined as someone who can speak, converse, read, or understand two languages equally well (this is referred to as a balanced bilingual), a bilingual person typically has a higher understanding of one language than another.

Bilingualism is described as using at least two languages, either individually or as a group of speakers. Bilingualism is the norm in the majority of countries around the world. Ambi-bilingualism is a word in bilingualism that refers to the ability and aptitude to perform equally well in two or more languages across a variety of fields. Individual bilingualism does not have a universally accepted definition. Bilingualism should be viewed as a continuum (Baetens Beardsmore, 1986). The monolingual speaker is at one end of the spectrum, whereas the individual who learned both languages in naturalistic circumstances as a youngster and speaks LA and LB with equal and native-like fluency is at the other end. Such ambi- or equi-

lingualism is theoretically ideal (Weinreich, 1968; Lyons, 1981), but it is uncommon in practice (Lyons, 1981). Along the continuum are those who exhibit greater or lesser degrees of bilingualism, including bilinguals who speak both languages fluently and proficiently but are more dominant in one than the other, as well as adult second language learners with varying levels of proficiency and mastery of the second language (L2).

There have already been attempts to categorize bilinguals according to their level of proficiency and fluency in the languages they speak, simply by age, context, or language acquisition method (the early/late and simultaneous/successive, formal/informal, acquired/learned distinctions, respectively), and by postulated language representation or processing mechanisms (the additive/subtractive and compound/co-ordinate/subordinate distinctions). The many kinds of bilingualism and their characteristics will be covered in the sections that follow.

2.Types of Bilingualism

To highlight the multidimensionality of bilingualism, scholars proposed multiple classifications based on the many dimensions of bilingualism they focused on.

2.1.Early and Late Bilingualism

Depending on when they were exposed to two or more languages, bilinguals can also be divided into early and late bilinguals. The acquisition of multiple languages at the pre-adolescent stage of life is known as early bilingualism (Baetens Beardsmore, 1986: 28). Learning one language before the age of eight and the other beyond that is known as late bilingualism.

Language proficiency is used to differentiate between early and late bilinguals. Mainly, early bilinguals are thought to have achieved native-like proficiency in both languages (Baetens

Beardsmore, 1986). Early bilingualism manifests as bilingualism as a native language, according to Swain (1972). The majority of late bilinguals, in contrast to early bilinguals, are considered non-native speakers of the L2, demonstrating structural grammatical deficiencies and an inability to recognize linguistic ambiguity as indicators of their lack of full L2 proficiency (Baetens Beardsmore, 1986).

Early bilingualism is also divided into two categories, which include: Early bilingualism can occur simultaneously or sequentially. Simultaneous early bilingualism happens when a child learns two languages simultaneously from birth. This frequently results in a strong bilingualism. Successive early bilingualism happens when a child partially acquires a first language and then learns a second language early in childhood. This can happen when a child transfers to a new environment where the prevailing language is not their original language. This normally results in a robust bilingualism, although the child needs time to acquire the second language.

Late bilingualism refers to bilinguals who learned their second language (L2) beyond the critical period, particularly when L2 is acquired in adulthood or adolescence. Late bilingualism is a form of successive bilingualism that occurs after the acquisition of L1. Because bilinguals have previously learned the L1, late bilingualism takes advantage of the individuals' experience to learn the L2.

2.2. Balanced and Dominant Bilinguals

The distinction between balanced and dominant (or unbalanced) bilinguals is based on the connection between fluency and proficiency in the languages that bilinguals master (Peal and Lambert, 1962). Balanced bilinguals have equivalent levels of skill and mastery in both languages, whereas dominant (or unbalanced) bilinguals have stronger proficiency in one language than the other(s). In other words, the individual in dominant bilingualism is more

fluent and competent in one of the two languages, whereas a balanced bilingual is more or less equally competent and proficient in both languages.

2.3. Folk and Elite Bilinguals

Bilinguals can be classified further based on cultural identification and language usage. Bilinguals can be characterized based on numerous societal aspects, in addition to individual characteristics. Fishman (1977) distinguishes between 'folk' and 'elite' bilinguals based on the social status of their language. Where folk bilinguals are often language minority community whose own language does not have a high status in the predominant language society in which they dwell. Elite bilinguals are those who speak a dominant language in a society and can also communicate in another language, adding value and benefit to the community.

2.4. Additive and Subtractive Bilinguals

According to Lambert (1974), bilinguals can be divided into additive and subtractive categories based on how their L2 affects their ability to retain their L1. Additive bilinguals are individuals who can become more proficient in their second language without losing their first; subtractive bilinguals, on the other hand, are those who learn or acquire their second language at the expense of their first language. Both of the languages that people learn should be respected in their community since they are additive bilinguals. This is known as additive bilingualism, and it occurs when learning a second language does not impede learning the first. Conversely, subtractive bilingualism happens when learning a second language interferes with learning a first language, making the first language the replacement. A person who learns the L2 to the detriment of the L1 is said to be subtractively bilingual. Competency and mastery of L1 decline in this situation, whereas proficiency and mastery of L2 (often the dominant language) increase.

2.5. Compound, coordinate, and subordinate Bilinguals

Compound, coordinate, and subordinate distinctions, according to Weinreich (1953), address the characteristics of how people arrange and store two or more linguistic codes. Compound bilinguals store two sets of linguistic codes (e.g., "Dog" and "Sag") in a single meaning unit; in other words, they have a single system of meaning for words that they use for both L1 and L2. Coordinate bilinguals, on the other hand, store and organize each linguistic code independently in two meaning units, and they have two systems of meaning for words: one system for words they know in L1 and another for words they know in L2. Additionally, subordinate bilinguals consider that their first language (L1) is used to understand and interpret the linguistic codes of their second language (L2). In particular, they are thought to have two sets of linguistic codes but only one meaning unit that can be accessed via their L1.

The classification of bilinguals was based on age, the context and way of language acquisition, the disparity between fluency and competency in the spoken languages, and the hypothesized processing mechanisms. It is critical to note that the majority of these dimensions are frequently linked. It might be suggested that one who is exposed to two languages from birth (simultaneously bilingual) can have a higher likelihood of being a balanced bilingual.