Perceptions of Language Acquisition in Different Bilingualism Development

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Abstract

When bilingualism is brought up as a term, is commonly associated with just the ability to speak two languages, and some other factors that come with this term are not considered in order to give an identity to the individuals who are considered bilinguals. Some aspects of this environment, for example, the background that individuals in how to acquire the language play an important role in order to see how those individuals perceive some of the aspects that are implied in linguistics studies. Another thing to consider is how the social environment that individuals have affects their language development and by the same, it can provide them a feeling of belongingness in certain environments that are around them. Also, these differences in the background of bilinguals can make them have a different perception of each aspect because even if the development of two languages has reached the same goal, the process that those individuals followed to achieve those goals was different and could make them get a different perspective due to the different aspects that each individual identifies in their different process. All of the aspects that are associated with the acquisition of a second language will be analyzed in this paper and will provide the data that allow the identification of each perspective of two different groups of bilinguals, and will make clearer if those aspects, has a big influence on language development.

Keywords: Bilingualism, migrant families, immigrants, language acquisition, Raised Bilinguals (RB), Non-Raised Bilinguals (NRB).

1. Introduction

When someone is being developed as a bilingual person, it is immediately connected to someone that just speaks two languages, but as we know to learn a language it is necessary more than just knowing how to speak it, it is necessary to be involved in the different aspects that are around the language that is being learned, for example, the variation in the languages according to different factors (geographical location, age, etc.), also the culture plays a role in the language when is being learned. This is why sometimes it can be considered that bilingualism has its own culture that is developed when the learner is acquiring the second language.

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2. Literature review

2.1 *Bilingualism*

Being considered a bilingual person is an aspect that is different aspect from being a language learner because even those terms are related to the same goal, the cognitive functions that work in the production of the language are different because to be considered "bilingual" we have to be exposed already to the process of acquisition of a second language, to clarify this, let's point to what Hamers et al. (2000) mentions "the concept of bilingualism refers to the state of a linguistic community in which two languages are in contact with the result that two codes can be used in the same interaction".

This difference was also mentioned by Bialystok et al. (2005) when they mention that bilingualism is more common to be used when you are referring to the whole scale of language proficiency, which includes the manage on the manage from the skills used in the language and the correct cognitive process of the language like if the individual is expressing in their mother tongue or if they use the language with an accurate proficiency as a native speaker. On the other hand, second language learners refer to learners with specific linguistic competence on a scale that they are not as well developed in the language as native speakers.

2.2 *Migration and immigration*

Is it very necessary to know that there is a difference between those aspects, some of them may consider these two aspects as the same, and some people may relate it to an illegal act of crossing to another country. But these terms have a definition that describes the actions since the early ages of time, for example, The Encyclopedia Britannica (2022) defines Human Migration as "the permanent change of residence by an individual or group; it excludes such movements as nomadism, labor, commuting, and tourism, all of which are transitory in nature" this presenting some benefits only for the people that decide to migrate to another place, forcing them to adopt some aspects that are required to achieve a good social development in that place they move in, for example, languages as a principal factor to have an easier way of relationship in the place to move.

On the other hand, immigration presents a difference according to this "adaptation". Parry (2002) defines immigration as "the process through which individuals become permanent residents or citizens of another country. Historically, the process of immigration has been of great social, economic, and cultural benefit to states" focusing a little on the last part of the definition it can be assumed that immigration presents such influence in the place individuals move, that the pace suffers some adaptations, "The immigration experience is long and varied and has in many cases resulted in the development of multicultural societies; many modern states are characterized by a wide variety of cultures and ethnicities that have derived from previous periods of immigration" (Parry, 2022), showing us the difference that migration requires that the individual adopts certain characteristics from the environment and immigration requires that the environment adopts certain characteristics from the individual.

2.3 *Consequences of bilingualism on a long-term basis*

A lot of researchers have shown the benefits that bilingualism has presented in society, but that research is based on short-term outcomes, Agirdag (2014) proposes to analyze the positive or negative consequences of the role of bilingualism on people. There are some aspects that should be considered to be mentioned in this part, for example, the identity that a bilingual develops, but this will be analyzed further in the paper. By now I agree with what Caldas and Caron-Caldas (2002) mention "bilingual adolescents have the added task of assimilating into their developing

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identified the dimension of "bilingual person", a complexity which most of their peers do not have" these authors, distinguish some problematics of teenagers when they are developing their identity in a bilingual environment in which they have to decide is there a language or cultural aspect that they feel more comfortable with, thus resulting in some problematics in a social environment in a familiar environment.

2.4 *Acquisition of a new language*

In this part, we will analyze, according to Lambert (1981), some of the cognitive effects that bilingual people present and identify if those effects play the role of an advantage in language learning. the difference in bilinguals to this study presents us with two variations, early bilinguals, which may be those bilinguals that get raised developing the two languages they speak at the same time, and late bilinguals, which are those bilinguals that learn a second language once they have developed the first language already.

The two kinds of bilinguals, show us different attitudes which they have a better development in the language, and in how they perceive the learning of a new language in different ways, for example, Lambert (1981) mentions "late French-English bilinguals were found to be less able than early bilinguals to draw on mixed-language associational clues" referring that early bilinguals have the facility developing this ability of takes some vocabulary or linguistic items from another language and integrates them into their language on the other hand lambert mentions that late bilinguals have a better development of presenting a difference between the two languages they have, avoiding them to mix the vocabulary in both languages, "late bilinguals are more inclined than early bilinguals to keep their two linguistic systems functionally distinctive and segregated" (Lambert, 1981: 18) also In a recent study, Lambert and Paivio have found that late bilinguals have a bigger facility than early ones to create mental images at the same time they translate words from one language to another.

2.5 *Languages preferences*

When we talk about language preferences, we should analyze which language an individual perceives as more comfortable for them, based on the experiences or the development of the identity they have developed through time (Caldas & Caron-Caldas, 2002). Some of the aspects to analyze in this topic are more related to some factors that individual experiences through their experience as a bilingual speaker. Some influences on which individuals may base the perception of comfortability in a language are two, Familiar and Social contexts.

These two aspect plays an important role in language preference, Caldas and Caron-Caldas (2002) directed research that demonstrates some of the affectations that some bilingual children experienced in the development of a bilingual identity, first of all, they claimed that family as being the first exposition to a language plays the role of demonstrates how a language works, but also with the pass of the time and the children becoming adolescents, they also play a role in non-belongingness to the language, due that is this period, teenagers tend to feel someone apart of the family and tries to avoid any other aspects that differentiate them from their family, in this case, adopting a second language as their preference in language.

This part of development is when the social context, or the friends of the individual, plays the role of provider with some belongingness to the individuals with a language they use the most with them in a social environment. But, in this same idea this aspect may seem to be interrupted if a factor in the family affects more strongly the preferences for another language, for example, the older brother seems to play a role of influence during this period and also provides a

different kind of influence over language perception of an individual, providing them with a familiar language preference again (Caldas & Caron-Caldas, 2002).

3. Methodology

The methodology that will be used in this paper will include the following elements to acquire the most precise information on this topic.

3.1 *Research question/s*

(1) What are the differences between Raised Bilingual and Non-Raised bilinguals' perception about language acquisition?

(2) What are the aspects that make an individual consider a language their "mother tongue"?

3.2 *Qualitative approach*

In this paper, to get the data that will be analyzed to determine the influences that present bilingualism in different individual contexts, the paper will use a qualitative approach to get more precise data that will show us the aspects of bilingualism.

According to Heigham and Croker (2009) qualitative research as a term "is an umbrella term used to refer to a complex and evolving research methodology" this methodology allows researchers to experiment with different data collection methods, such as observation, interviews, diaries, etc. also this methodology includes several research techniques and strategies that have been developed to collect data and analyze it in a day-to-day conceptualization that provides with data that demonstrates the behave of individuals in a natural basis (Heigham & Croker, 2009).

The qualitative approach in applied linguistics allows us to get data that we as researchers may analyze using interpretative analysis to simplify the data and make it easier for us to understand how people in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) develop their language skills depending on the different contexts that allows them to get the knowledge in a second language (Heigham & Croker, 2009).

3.3 *Case study*

The cases that are going to be analyzed in this paper will be based on 4 individuals that are identified as bilinguals, but with the difference that they have developed bilingualism in different contexts, two of the individuals in this paper have developed bilingualism as children that have to develop their Spanish and English at the same time due to, they were raised in a Mexican family that migrates to the US. On the other hand, the other two individuals have developed the language at a more advanced age once they have developed completely their native language (Spanish).

3.4 *Inquiry tools (interviews, observation)*

The method by which information will be recovered in this research is through short interviews with people that had to be developed as bilingual children because their family is Mexican, and had to migrate to the US. Those participants were born and grew up in that country,

were exposed to their parent's first language (Spanish), and had to the language that is around them in society. I want to apply this method because I consider that it can provide me with the perspective that people in my research have based on their own experience, also Thelwall and Nevill (2021) mentions that interviews allow non-researchers to articulate their perspective in their own words and reduces the opportunity for the research to impose their perspective.

Another tool to apply to this research is based observation, the observation of the individuals will be applied because the data that I can collect from this method will be based on how the individuals on my observation behave in a natural environment for them, like a conversation with family or in the widespread use of the language. Observation will be used in this research to get some additional data as Jamshed (2014) mentions "observational data can be integrated as auxiliary or confirmatory research" about the function of observation that may work to get a better analysis of the situation that the individuals in the research experience. This is to get a complete analysis of individuals' behavior by the ethnographic fields.

4. Data analysis and discussion of results

4.1 *Raised bilinguals*

Raised bilinguals (RB) for this paper will refer to bilinguals that were influenced by the simultaneous development of two languages from an early age in childhood and that provide the ability for fluent and accurate communication in two languages (Greene, 2022). In the case of the participants of this study, two of my four participants have developed as bilinguals since an early age in childhood, and both of these participants have a similar background in their families. Their families present a migration background that makes the raising of children the necessary development in two languages, by one hand, learning their parent's mother tongue is a familiar communicational factor, and on the other hand, developing the language that is used in the place the family moves, in order to have socially correct development of individuals (*Ibid.*, 2022).

For those same participants, it was the common factor that the language they started to develop first, was the language that was used by their parents as their mother tongue, this factor could be considered a kind of inheritance from parents to their children. Having in mind that is the dominant language spoken in their familiar context, can be assumed that sometimes RB can identify this language as the mother tongue in their linguistic development, and maybe they will have an identity that is more related to this language. Or, by the other hand, this kind of belongingness with the language may result in a preference by the individuals for a language that is not the one spoken in their familiar environment.

4.2 *Mother tongue and family*

The context that all my participants share, is that they all have a bilingual context in his family, some of them has parents that develop a second language for a particular reason for them, and some of them migrate to another country and have to adopt the language by a social adaptation. Or by the other hand, the family of other of my participants are monolinguals but they have an interest in particular that makes them learn, some other worked as the influence to my participants to learn a second language.

The participants in this paper show that even two of them were raised as bilinguals, and they were developing two languages at the same time, they identified one of those languages as their mother tongue, and all of my participants mentioned that the language that they identify as their mother tongue, is the one that was used according to their familiar context, for example, one of my RB who grows in a Mexican family context that moves to the USA, mentioned that the language that he was exposed to first was Spanish, due that it was the language that his family

speaks the most and that even he develops Spanish at the same time that English, he does not have a problem in identifying it as his mother tongue.

On the other hand, my other RB participant mentioned something interesting, this participant is from Canada, a country that speaks as English as Spanish, and he mentioned that even though his parents have French as his mother tongue, he identifies English as his mother tongue because he mentioned that due to his parents decides to adopt this language as the most used in his familiar environment, and even he also speaks French, English becomes the dominant language in his family.

4.3 *Social interaction*

One another factor that also affects a lot the language perception of my participants, is the social environment that is around them. For some of them, it was the principal factor why they had to learn a second language, and for some others, this affects them as a motivator to start learning a new language, but for all of them, developing a new language was affected by a social interest in communication. For three of my four participants, it presents a big impact on their perception of the language, due and those participants mentioned that they feel more comfortable using language that is not more related to their familiar context. They mentioned that the language that they use the most in their social life and environment is the language that they feel most comfortable for them to speak the most. For my other participant, is an NRB and mentioned that the language that she more comfortable speaking is her first language, this may be because the social environment that she has was more related to this first language, and as it is the same that is spoken in her family, is the language that she is relating the most part of the time.

4.4 *Acquisition of a new language*

One another factor that my participants share, is the perception of a new language. All of them agree that learning a third language for them is difficult, this was interesting for me because some people including me may think that learning a new language to people who speak two languages already can represent a bigger facility in their language development. As Cenoz (2003) said, "Third language acquisition shares many characteristics with second language acquisition, but it also presents differences because third language learners have more language experience," even though the process of learning a third language may be the same and could be easier for learners to relate that a past knowledge to something new, it seems that is a separated aspect that these bilinguals perceive because they mention that it is challenging for them the fact of a new language because is something new. One of my participants for example said:

> "*I try to learn French at school, but It was very difficult because it was something different for me.*"

This comment was made by one of my RB participants, this could be something to consider due to the fact that the language development he has, was different from the development of the other bilinguals, and this perception of a new language could be hard for him because he was acquiring the knowledge of something new. And by the other hand, for my NRB participants, the acquirement of a new language seems to be difficult as well even if they have a background in the development of a past second language and may have knowledge that can be related to the acquirement of a new language, it seems that even this process of the acquisition follows the same process, it involves different aspects that make it difficult for all the bilinguals that I have on this research.

5. Conclusion

All the aspects that were analyzed in this paper allow the identification of different aspects that answer the questions that were presented at the beginning of the paper. It was shown for example, that sometimes the need of some people to migrate to another country may affect the future that those individuals are creating, making some people have to create a new familiar environment that will involve the adaptation of some aspects that will present a benefit for the people involved on that environment one day in the future. Also, by this paper, it was shown that some RB can feel such a good relation to the two languages that they are related that they prefer to have a different variation in the language that combines aspects of both languages (Spanglish, for example).

Another important aspect was the role that society presents in the development of preferences for an individual because all of my participant for this research seems to be more comfortable with the language that is more used in their social environment, this may be affected by the quantity of time that requires for the individuals to use the language. Also, it was shown that even when there is a monolingual environment for individuals, it can be modified due to the need that a person has to move to another place that requires those individuals to learn a new language, to then, decide to adopt this second language as the dominant language on individual's life in order to create a good relationship in their social environment.

Finally, the whole research provides data that shows that even there can be a difference in bilingual's backgrounds. It shows that the linguistics aspects involved seem to be not so affected as they could be, for example, in the perception of the acquirement of a new language, that for all of my participants, even if it was something they could be interested in, it can be difficult if the individual is not prepared enough.

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