

Preface

Bilingual First Language Acquisition (BFLA), or the development of two languages from birth in young children, has become a prominent topic in the last decade. More and more students are interested in the topic, either just in order to learn more about it, or to start their own investigations. Advanced students interested in Bilingual First Language Acquisition in different departments and programs have different overall specializations. The main ones are Psychology, Linguistics and Education. In addition, there are also students in Speech Therapy, Communication Disorders, and Health and Social Work with an interest in the topic.

At the same time that students' interest in the topic has increased, BFLA has often become a topic in many different kinds of courses. BFLA may be a topic in a sociolinguistically oriented course on Bilingualism. Or it may be taught as part of a psycholinguistically oriented course on Child Language Acquisition. In Education programs, BFLA may be discussed in the framework of a course on Second Language Acquisition. In Speech and Hearing programs, bilingual acquisition is often discussed in a course on Communication Disorders. There are now also courses on bilingual language development that have BFLA as their main or only topic.

The readings for courses that have BFLA on their subject list often include a selection of key primary publications, as well as overview chapters published in handbooks. For instructors wishing to give their students a more in-depth and teaching oriented coverage of BFLA, however, there are no texts available. This textbook aims to fill that gap.

The book's intended audience consists of students who have at least two years of college education behind them. At the same time, it is also aimed at graduate students. The study questions or suggestions for projects at the end of each chapter that carry the indication 'advanced' are meant particularly for them. Also, more in-depth coverage is included in some explanations and illustrations ('Boxes') that are meant primarily for advanced students in linguistics or psychology.

This book starts from the assumption that knowledge about bilingual children's language development is grounded in adequate empirical research methods. The aim is to educate readers from many different backgrounds both about bilingual acquisition and about some of the methodological approaches that have been and can be used to gain insight into its development.

Central to the book is the notion that how children in a bilingual setting learn to speak is variable and will very much depend on the specific environments they find themselves in. These environments will, among others, influence whether they speak two languages or only one. Because of their fundamental importance I will pay much attention to the possible environments for the acquisition of two languages from birth.

After the general introduction in Chapter 1 in which I set the stage for the rest of the book, I give an overview of bilingual children's language development in Chapter 2. This overview chapter starts with a discussion of how early language development takes place at the intersection of interaction, socialization and maturation. Chapter 2 also introduces some basic linguistic concepts that are necessary for a good understanding of the rest of the book for those students who have little background in linguistics. It also gives a very summary overview of the main developmental course taken by children who hear two languages from birth. Before I embark on a more detailed discussion of bilingual development and its context, I discuss some important methodological issues specific to studying BFLA in Chapter 3. I also explain some of the methods that have been used to investigate bilingual acquisition. Although some of Chapter 3 is directed at students wishing to pursue their own research projects on BFLA, the methodological issues I cover are important as background for the rest of the book. In Chapter 4 I explore the BFLA learning context, bilingual socialization practices and the role of the speech heard by children. Chapter 4 is divided into two main parts: one that focuses on children's bilingual environments and another that focuses on how these environments affect development.

After the first half of the book, I describe BFLA children's bilingual acquisition in detail. I take the developmentally determined route of starting with the earliest signs of developing linguistic knowledge, namely, how very young bilingually raised infants perceive the sounds in their linguistic environment and how they tackle the task of producing sounds themselves. This is discussed in Chapter 5. After this, I look at the words that bilingual children understand and use in Chapter 6. These words are soon combined into sentences, and this brings me to Chapter 7 on the structure and ordering of words as they are used in utterances produced by bilingual children. Sentences make up a conversation or a narrative, and aspects of the use of these larger linguistic structures by bilingual children are also discussed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 8, the final chapter, talks about what I call 'harmonious bilingual development', how it can be fostered, and offers a general conclusion to the book. It also outlines some directions for research that I see as important.

My overall focus in this book is on children under the age of six. The most obvious reason for this is that most BFLA research concerns children under this age as well. The underlying cause of this restriction is that as in monolingual child language acquisition research, the emphasis in bilingual acquisition studies is on the young child's acquisition of language in an informal setting, without formal language instruction at school. Since many children start school and concomitant formal language instruction around the age of six, it becomes more difficult after that age to study language development as it evolves in an uninstructed setting.

Throughout the book I pay attention to the specifically 'bilingual' aspects of early bilingual development such as the relationship between bilingual children's two languages and the use of two languages in one word, sentence or conversation. I also compare aspects of BFLA with monolingual acquisition and, to a lesser extent, with the acquisition of a second language in early childhood. The reader will hopefully forgive me that when I discuss findings from monolingual acquisition I often draw on data from the acquisition of Dutch,

my first language, besides, of course, English, the most substantially investigated language-in-acquisition in the world.

On the whole, I will focus more on the empirical research findings about bilingual acquisition than on theoretical issues, although of course my basic stance with regard to the importance of children's learning environments represents a theoretical position in itself. For advanced students, I include references to sources that address current theoretical debates in the Recommended reading sections found at the end of most chapters.

The multidisciplinary interest in BFLA reflects the fact that BFLA should be studied from a variety of perspectives. Regardless of one's particular perspective or research question, however, a real understanding of BFLA requires at least some background in two distinct areas of specialization: the field of child language development and the field of bilingualism. This textbook combines insights from both the fields of bilingualism and child language development and thereby hopes to offer a richer perspective than either of these fields can by themselves. These fields, which are interdisciplinary, are rarely offered as courses of study within the same program. Also, there are few senior faculty members who are specialists in both. I have been fortunate enough to have been able to incorporate both fields in my own training: the sociolinguistics of bilingualism mainly under the guidance of Professor Hugo Baetens Beardsmore at the Free University of Brussels, and child language acquisition under the guidance of Professor Eve Clark at Stanford University, who also taught me about the importance of research methods. I dedicate this book to both of them.

I bring to this textbook my now 30-year-long experience as a bilingualism scholar. That experience has included reading widely in the bilingualism and child language literature and carrying out my own empirical research on early bilingual development up until today. In my capacity as a bilingual children's specialist, I have had occasion to meet and talk to many people in bilingual families all over the world. I have learned a lot from them, and from the many educators, speech therapists and social workers involved with bilingual children that I have met throughout the years. I also bring to this book my nearly 50-year-long experience as a bilingual (and later, multilingual) person, and my background as the mother of a bilingual child. I have very much enjoyed bringing all this experience together in this book and hope that you, the reader, can benefit from it.

Some technical notes about this book

1. Although many of the examples throughout this textbook are anonymous, they are always based on actual people's behavior.
2. Twenty years ago, the field of BFLA was quite small. It has fortunately grown considerably, and it is no longer possible to give comprehensive overviews. This book is no exception. It is necessarily selective. This does not imply that what is not mentioned is not worthwhile.
3. Most of the references are limited to readily available published material. Unpublished doctoral dissertations and master's theses are not generally referenced. Neither are internal research reports or unpublished conference presentations, except where they

represent new work in areas that previously had not been studied. Some key references are identified at the end of most chapters in a short Recommended reading section. All citations are referenced in the Bibliography at the end of the book, but readers may refer to the book's website for separate bibliographies for each chapter at <http://www.mmtextbooks.com/bfla/>.

4. Because bilingualism is by definition not limited to a single language, I have tried to reference publications in many different languages. For the examples, I have also tried to span a variety of languages. I apologize to authors of texts in languages that I do not read but whose work is pertinent to BFLA.
5. In view of the broad intended audience I have chosen to define rather more than fewer terms. Terms are either defined in the text, in separate 'boxes' and/or in the Glossary at the end of the book. Terms that appear in the Glossary are highlighted in the text at their first appearance. I strongly recommend that readers look up these terms when they first meet up with them. Sometimes, I have explained terms only in the Glossary, and not in the text, because explaining them in the text would be too disruptive for the flow of the 'story'.

Readers with training in linguistics may find some of the definitions and explanations of linguistic terminology rather too general and theoretically ambiguous. I hope they will bear with me and see those definitions and explanations for what they are: aids to help readers without linguistic training understand the facts of bilingual acquisition.

6. Children's ages are usually indicated as year;month. For instance; 1;6 means one year and six months. For younger children, indications in months (e.g. 4.5 months) may be used as well. For easy reference, I have added a key that 'translates' between months and years in Box 2.8 in Chapter 2.
7. Especially for Chapters 5, 6 and 7 this textbook has not been able to do full justice to the many complexities of the methods, empirical evidence and theoretical issues involved in the study of BFLA children's phonological, lexical and morphosyntactic development. These chapters are brief summaries of the major issues and findings so far. They should be seen as starting points for a deeper understanding.
8. Throughout the book I have differentiated between text, illustrative boxes and study activities for less and more advanced students. Paragraphs that are particularly geared towards more advanced students with a background in linguistics or psychology are shaded in gray. Other students may skip these portions and will still learn about the main issues and findings. Some boxes are also meant more for advanced students. This is indicated by the abbreviation 'adv.' after reference is made to a particular box number. Endnotes are not crucial for understanding the main chapters, but offer additional and/or nuancing information for more advanced readers. The Appendices are meant for advanced students as well.
10. Study activities that involve students 'going out into the field' and doing their own small projects are labelled *Project*. Study activities that specifically feature an internet resource are marked *WEB*.

11. When I refer to children as ‘English–Spanish’ or as ‘monolingual French’, for instance, I am referring to the languages they are learning, not their citizenship or nationality.

Disclaimer

This book sometimes refers to specific languages to exemplify situations relevant to Bilingual First Language Acquisition. Sometimes these situations are not altogether positive. These references to specific languages are by no means intended to express any disrespect for those languages or their speakers. In most cases, another language could have been chosen to exemplify a particular situation (with then, again, possible negative connotations for that language...).

