

Reviews

K. HYLSTENSTAM and L. K. OBLER (eds.): *Bilingualism across the Lifespan: Aspects of Acquisition, Maturity, and Loss*
Cambridge University Press, 1989

When I was first looking for an academic job in psychology in the late seventies, the field of lifespan developmental psychology was enjoying its debut and it seemed as if every job announcement was recruiting for faculty with interests in this area. In a burst of (shameless) insight, it occurred to me that although my degree was in experimental psychology, because of my interest in second language acquisition, I was qualified as someone interested in change phenomena not just into adulthood, but beyond. Although I did not end up with a job labelling me as such, it is indeed the case that anyone with a broad interest in the phenomenon of bilingualism carries with them an interest in lifespan development.

In this edited volume containing a dozen contributions plus the introduction, Kenneth Hyltenstam and Loraine Obler make explicit this assumption that the study of bilingualism necessarily entails a broad view of development, including the attrition of language skill. One consequence of such breadth is the need to adopt a diversity of theoretical and methodological constructs, yet as Hyltenstam and Obler point out, with increasing specialization, there are insufficient opportunities to stand back and reflect on interrelationships between their specialties. The editors offer the collection of papers as an occasion when the field could be viewed as a whole, and the prospects for 'cross-fertilization of the whole field and new perspectives on specific topics' (p. 1) can be assessed. The collection is based on a set of papers presented in a symposium organized by the editors at the Linguistic Society of America 1986 Summer Institute, supplemented by additionally solicited pieces.

The book is organized without subdivisions. The chapters are organized in approximate order from those dealing with the acquisition of bilingualism to those dealing with language attrition, with chapters on more 'steady state' bilingualism in between. Beyond underscoring (and celebrating) the diversity of the field, the editors offer little by way of structure to the volume as a whole. The introduction is somewhat disappointing in this regard, because it is more a description of the contents of the chapters, and less an analysis of burning issues and how the chapters advance them. Nor does one find a discussion of what specific factors led to the selection of the chapter topics, and why some potential candidates were left out (for example, the important overlaps between bilingualism and social psychological and emotional functioning). Further, only sparse reference is made in the various chapters to other chapters in the volume (except for the introduction, I found just one, on p. 188). Thus, the volume is

not unlike an extended issue of *Applied Linguistics* or *Applied Psycholinguistics*, but without the benefit of formal peer review.

The individual contributions, however, contain a good deal of exciting new studies, some of which promise to be classics in the field. Jürgen Meisel reports a study of simultaneous bilingualism, in which he questions the status of a stage in development proposed by Volterra and Taeschner when the two lexicons are distinct but only one set of syntactic rules exists. This is a masterful chapter, critiquing the existing evidence, laying down important empirical ground rules, and reporting new data from two children exposed to German and French in a one-person one-language environment where distinctive syntax is used from the earliest phases.

Another stellar chapter is Eric Kellerman's analysis of why even advanced Dutch learners of English continue to produce imperfect conditionals of the following sort: *If I would be able to live all over again, I would be a gardener*. The formal analysis of the structure is engaging, followed up by a winning empirical argument attributing this structural feature to a conspiracy of a tendency to disambiguate the past tense (partly due to Dutch structure) and to produce symmetrical morphology.

The chapter by Shana Poplack, Susan Wheeler, and Anneli Westwood offers important data on code-switching and borrowing in Finnish-English bilingualism where the two languages are typologically distinct as contrasted, say, to English and Spanish where structural opportunities are more available. They lay down some important considerations on variationist methodology, and practice what they preach in demonstrating their ability to distinguish between code-switching and borrowing in their data, and arguing that typological similarity tends to exhibit code-switching while typological differences lead to borrowing.

Also highly recommended is the pair of chapters on idiomaticity by Carlos Yorio and Maria Bolander, as they help us understand variability *within* formulaic language. Yorio's work is theoretically important in questioning the extension of the notion of formulaic utterances to adults as a construct (by displaying adult written language data showing that idiomatic forms can be productive). Bolander presents a highly interesting empirical demonstration of the idiomaticity effect by showing that inversion and negation rules can vary in applicability depending upon variables such as communicative needs, frequency, and perceptual salience. Her approach to the problem deserves close study and will undoubtedly be replicated and extended by future researchers.

Aside from these chapters that might be considered lasting and major contributions, the book contains some case studies that all fall under the category of 'highly unusual and interesting'. Opler's case study of a bilingual dyslexic reader of languages that are read in opposite directions (English and Hebrew) offers suggestive evidence that specific languages learned by a bilingual may entail differential processing. Hyltenstam and Stroud's case of two bilingual elderly with Alzheimer's dementia suggests, among other things, that code-switching ability is preserved even in advanced cases of this unfortunate condition. Herbert Seliger looks at relative clause marking reduction in the loss

of English by a girl who immigrated to Israel at age six, and argues that the loss is governed by a process of redundancy reduction.

For completeness, I should mention that the volume also contains chapters by Margaret Humes-Bartlo asking whether there are cognitive differences between good and poor second language learners, by Suzanne Flynn looking at the predictive power of the directionality principle in universal grammar in understanding transfer in relative clause acquisition, and by Ellen Perelman addressing the question of independence versus interdependence in bilingual processing. These chapters round out the editor's views on the diverse nature of the study of bilingualism.

As I intimated at the outset of the review, the book's value is in enabling us to take the field (or 'field') of bilingualism and compressing it within the bounds of a single volume. We can then ask whether it fulfills its explicit goal, as 'a long-felt need to gauge how newer developments in bilingual research bear on the classical questions of how the bilingual's two (or more) language systems interact with each other and with other higher cognitive systems, neurological substrata and the social environment' (p. 1). The answer, unfortunately, is that it is all very interesting and complex, and the editors leave it in the hands of the reader to determine whether progress has been made.

I would leave the reader of the volume to view it through the lens provided by the one chapter I have excluded up to this point of the review, by Michael Sharwood Smith—in fact, read it first. Although the chapter deals with the topic of the cross-linguistic influence in language loss and essentially summarizes arguments available elsewhere, Sharwood Smith elegantly outlines a conspiracy framework that consists of at least twelve factors, including typological proximity, iconicity, coding efficiency, ludic potential (play with words), to mention a few. This sort of fine-grained and formally definable analysis of the linguistic filter needs to be used to go through the chapters, and I believe the best chapters of this book display this quality in addition to solid data analysis.

Finally, I must address the best audience for this book. The jacket describes it as appropriate for researchers and graduate students, but would it be useful for a seminar? I would probably not use the book for an introductory graduate seminar, because for the most part the chapters themselves do not contain extensive literature reviews of the area. However, this would be an excellent book to be used in an advanced seminar that assesses the state of the field, or as a reader volume to accompany a more general textbook on bilingualism such as Hamers and Blanc (1989). As a whole, the quality of the contributions is commendable, and the editors are to be thanked for what must have been a difficult task of assembly.

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REFERENCE

Hamers, J. and M. Blanc. 1989. *Bilinguality and Bilingualism*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.