

Summary of Points VII. – XII of „The Bilingual Child: Some Issues and Perspectives“

VII. Stages in Monolingual and Bilingual Language Development

Phonological Development

Like monolinguals (M), bilinguals (B) learn sound distinction, not single sounds.

Task for B is more challenging because they have to separate the two languages. Cues such as syllable length, phonotactic structures and place and manner of articulation are used.

Vocabulary Development

Constraint by cognitive development, linguistic capacity and socialization practices.

Input of second language is used.

Morpho-syntactic Development

Parallels the development of M: Simple structures are acquired first, more complex structures later on.

VIII: The Two Linguistic Systems in Bilingual Children

The Unitary Hypothesis

Child goes through a stage of language confusion. Three stage model:

Stage 1: Hybrid lexicon, no translational equivalents.

Stage 2: Separation of lexicon but shared syntactic rules.

Stage 3: Two languages are separated in terms of vocabulary and syntax.

The Dual System Hypothesis

Child does not go through an initial state of language confusion but differentiates them as early as age 2;0.

IX. Input Poverty and Input Modality

Bilingualism of deaf children: spoken language and sign language. Children of hearing parents often get less input than children of deaf parents.

Sign language is acquired in the same way as spoken language: One-word, two-word, multiple word expression. First signs occur earlier than first words.

Spoken language is acquired in the same way as hearing children acquire, but at a much slower pace depending on the remaining hearing capability. They show difficulties with functional categories.

X. Code Mixing and Code Switching

CM: Mixing of language within a sentence.

CS: Mixing of language across sentence boundaries.

Children show a strongly rule governed language mixing. But the rules seem different from child to child. Domination of one language in CM is due to different rate of language growth, discourse style of the parents or social factors.

XI. Bilingual Children and Speech Disorders

Bilingual children are often mistakenly labelled as children with speech disorders. But studies have shown that children's CM is highly rule governed and that they select the appropriate language with sociolinguistic competence. Studies which find connections between stuttering and bilingualism do not resist a closer examination.

XII. Conclusions and Future Research

Research on bilingual children can contribute to our understanding of first language acquisition.

Bibliography:

Bhatia, Tej K. & Ritchie, William C. (1999), 'The Bilingual Child: Some Issues and Perspectives', in Ritchie & Bhatia (eds.), p.569-643.