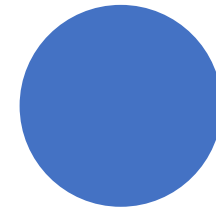


Nizhny Novgorod
2019

Acquiring a New Language in
Different Socio Cultural Contexts



Roadmap

Socio Cultural aspects of language acquisition:
When and Where?

Socio Cultural aspects of language acquisition:
What is language dominance?

Socio Cultural aspects of language acquisition:
Do we ever forget one of our languages?

Socio Cultural aspects of language acquisition:
Why would a teacher care?

Social Aspects of Language Acquisition: When and Where?

from birth

A German-speaking child lives and studies in Germany

A Spanish woman got married to a British man. Their child is growing up in England.

at the age of teen

A German-speaking child lives and studies in Germany

A Russian student got accepted to a German University and comes to study in Germany.

A professor from China is invited to come to America to give a talk in English.

in childhood

A Russian student got accepted to a German University and comes to study in Germany.

A Turkish couple moved to Germany
They are raising their children here.

A professor from China is invited to come to America to give a talk in English.

A child moved to Germany from Armenia with her family. She is studying at school in Germany.

in adulthood

A skilled worker from Ukraine comes to work in Germany. He is sharing an apartment with a friend and does contraction jobs.

A professor from China is invited to come to America to give a talk in English.

Social Contexts of Language Acquisition:

in real life
(naturalistic)

A skilled worker from Ukraine comes to work in Germany. He is sharing an apartment with a friend and does contraction jobs.

A Russian student got accepted to a German University and comes to study in Germany.

A Turkish couple moved to Germany. They are raising their children here.

A Spanish woman got married to a British man. Their child is growing up in England.

A child moved to Germany from Armenia with her family. She is studying at school in Germany.

A German-speaking child lives and studies in Germany

?

A professor from China is invited to come to America to give a talk in English.

in the
classroom

Parallel vs. Sequential

- parallel = both languages from birth
- sequential = the second language (L2) starts later than the first language (L1)

Early vs. Late

- early = L2 starts around the age of 4 (Schwartz, 2004; Meisel, 2011)
- late = L2 starts after the age of 6 (Lenenberg, 1967)
 - after the age of 7-8 (Johnson & Newport, 1989, 1991)
 - after 11-14 (Mayberry & Lock, 2003)

HERITAGE SPEAKERS

- proficiency
- dominance
- ?
- switched dominance

Balanced vs. Non-Balanced

- balanced = equally comfortable with both languages
- non-balanced = one language is less proficient / less dominant

Who is right?

- Person A and Person B live in Russia.
- Person A is of Armenian origin. Person B is of Russian origin

Dialogue

Person A: - I speak Russian most of my time. I speak Russian at work and to my husband. I think, I am Russian dominant now.

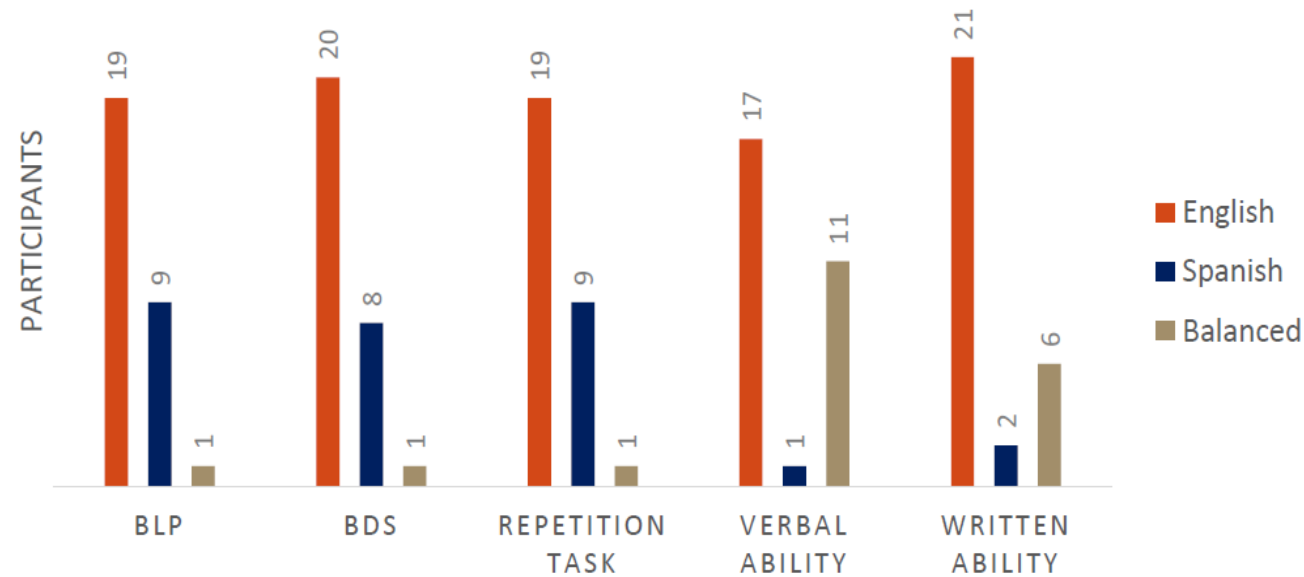
Person B: - But I still hear your Armenian accent. I think, you are still Armenian dominant.

Who is right?

Do different measures of language dominance yield comparable results?

Results

Dominance classifications



(Solis, Stephanich and Lopez 2019)

- Different measures of language dominance return inconsistent results
- Is there a dominance measure that assesses overall dominance?

Different measures of Language Dominance

A look at Portuguese migration in Germany

- 1964: Portugal and Germany signed a bilateral agreement on labor recruitment
- Since the 1970's: different waves of migration and remigration (Baganha & Marques, 2001; Pinheiro, 2010)
- Many Portuguese migrants go back to Portugal: frequently, some members of the family return, others remain in Germany
- *GASTARBEITER* (guest workers) –generation: aim of buying their «own house» in Portugal.



(Flores 2019)

Dominant Language:

- German

Family Language:

- Portuguese

Age of Return:

- Pre-school (7)
- Primary school (6-10/12)
- Teenagers (after 10/12)
- Young adults (after 18)

How stable are early acquired languages?

Age of Acquisition: New Facts

Flores (2010)

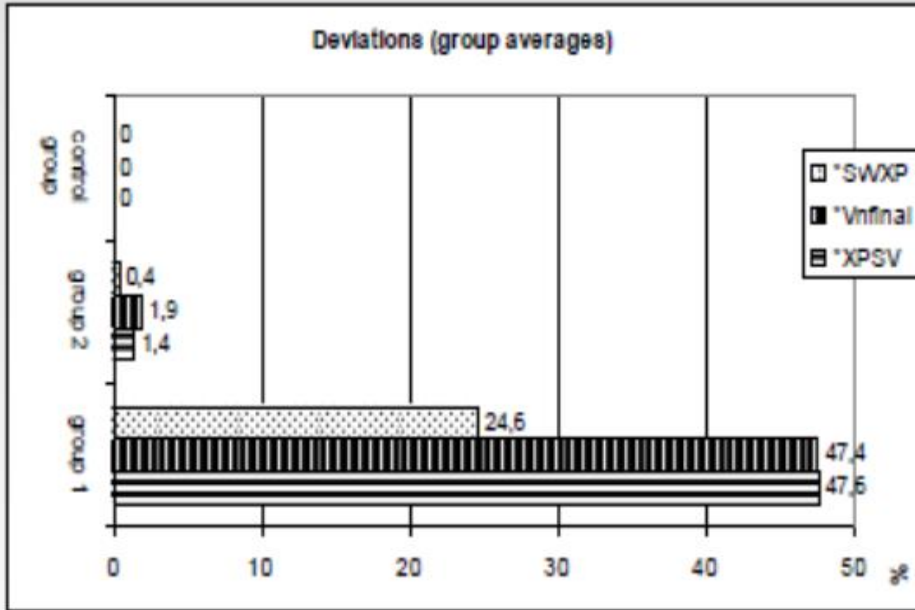
- ❖ Corpus of oral speech, based on conversation and story telling
- ❖ 16 returnees (mean age at testing: 20.8; SD: 6.6)
- ❖ Age at return:
child returnees (7-10 yrs; mean 8.4);
teenage returnees (11-14 yrs; mean 12.5)
- ❖ Controls: speech data of 4 bilingual children living in Germany
- ❖ VERB PLACEMENT in German

	Participants	Age at return	Age at recording	Length of stay in Portugal
Group 1 <i>child returnees</i>	Eunice	7	17	9;09
	Helena	7	24	17;08
	Tiago	7	19	12;00
	Rita	8	11	2;11
	Iolanda	9	11	2;01
	Sofia	9	20	11;08
	Irene	10	18	7;00
	Silvia	10	21	11;03
Group 2 <i>teenage returnees</i>	Carina	11	18	7;08
	Inês	12	34	22;00
	Alice	12	19	7;02
	Paula	12	21	9;09
	Júlia	13	38	23;00
	Bruna	13	20	6;07
	Anita	13	22	8;06
	Carlos	14	22	8;00
Control Group	Rui	9	10	0;05
	Zé	-	6	<i>still in Germany</i>
	Celeste	-	7	<i>still in Germany</i>
	Ricardo	-	8	<i>still in Germany</i>

- 2 experimental groups
 - Group 1: children before 10
 - Group 2: children after 10
- 1 control group
 - Bilingual children, who live in Germany

Social aspects of language acquisition:
When do we forget one of our languages?

Flores (2010)



❖ The speakers who have lost contact with German during their teenage years do not show difficulties with regard to verb placement, even if the lack of input has lasted for a long time.

❖ On the contrary, the loss of regular input before the age of 11 seems to drastically influence the language proficiency of bilingual speakers.

1. VERB SECOND (V2 / XPVS)

(1a) Dort **hatten wir** keine Familie.
there had we no family

*V3 [XPSV]

(1b) *Dort ich **spreche** nur Deutsch.
there I spoke only German

2. VERB FINAL (Vfinal)

(2a) Wenn wir in der Straße **waren**,...
when we in the street were

*Vfinal

(2b) Ich glaube *dass meistens sie **gehen** zu die Stadt.
I think that mostly they go to the city

3. vOV - STRUCTURES

(3a) In Portugal **habe** ich das schon **gesehen**.
in Portugal have I that already seen

*vVO

(3b) *Sie **hat geheiratet** mit den Hase.
she had married with the rabbit

After a certain age certain grammatical properties are not susceptible to attrition.
(Flores 2010)

Social aspects of language acquisition:
When do we forget one of our languages?

Participant:

▪ Bilingual girls - 9 years old at return

Period of data collection:

▪ 3 weeks – 5 months – 13 months – 18 months **after return to Portugal** [4 sessions]

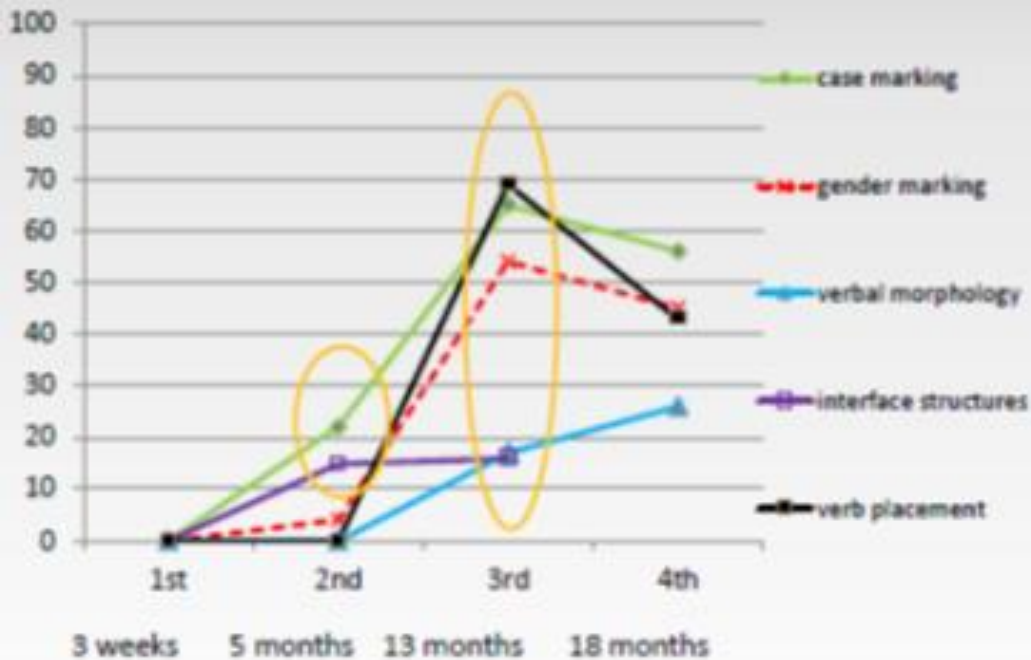
Method:

▪ (semi) spontaneous oral production (conversation, interviews, story telling, picture descriptions) + sentence completion task

Linguistic domains:

▪ Morpho-syntax: word order (verb placement); object + subject realization; verb and nominal morphology (gender, case)

Summary of the results



Fast decline of the participants linguistic competence (in German):

- First attrition effects after 5 months – some word retrieval difficulties; **inappropriate subject omission, case errors**, no problems with verb placement + verbal agreement
- Severe attrition effects in **all domains** after 13 months.
- Severe inhibition /loss of productive skills 18 months after return
- Controlled sentence production task in the last session.

Strong attrition effects show after a year without exposure to a language. (Flores 2010)

Social aspects of language acquisition:
When do we forget one of our languages?

- Why is starting period important?
 - phonology of the L2 after 12 months of age
- How do languages influence each other?
 - bilingual mental lexicon

Social aspects of language acquisition:
Why would a teacher care?

Age of perfect sound discrimination (Werker and Tees 1984)

Participants:

- infants, aged 6-8 months; 8-10 months; 10-12 months;
- adult speakers of English
- adult speakers of Thompson

Languages:

- English (/ba/ - /da/)
- Thompson (/ki/ - /qi/)
- Hindi (/ta/ - /ta/)

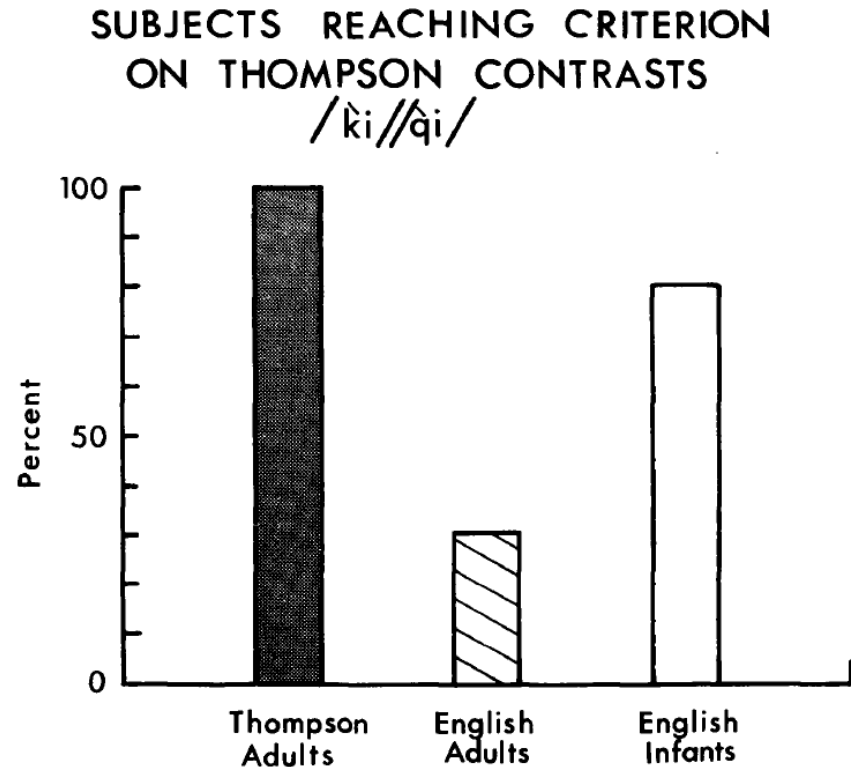


Figure 2. Proportion of Thompson-speaking adults, English-speaking adults, and infants from English-speaking homes reaching criterion on the Thompson glottalized velar/uvular contrast (/k̠i/ - /q̠i/).

CROSS-LANGUAGE SPEECH PERCEPTION

59

TABLE 1
Infant Discrimination Performance on Two Non-English Speech Contrasts

Reached Criterion	(1)	(2)	(3)
	6-8 months	8-10 months	10-12 months
The Retroflex/Dental Contrast /t̠a/ - /t̠a/			
Yes	11	8	2
No	1	4	8
The Velar/Uvular contrast /k̠i/ - /q̠i/			
Yes	8	8	1
No	2	6	9

- Learning a new language does not turn off previously learnt languages
= the brain works harder with many languages:
 - retrieving a word in any language activates the entire lexicon, the L1 + L2
(Marian & Spivey 2003; Marian, Spivey & Hirsch 2003, among others).



Example:

Please, look at the **maker**

(*marka* (Rus) = stamp)

at the **mosque**

(*mozg* (Rus) = brain)

How do languages influence each other?

?

Are the languages we know separated in our mind?

What about code-switching?

Is it a surface manifestation of bilingual co-activation?

How do languages influence each other?

What exactly do we switch?

Language-switching Grammar is not involved	Code-switching Grammar is involved
one-word utterances name pictures in different languages (especially, in class)	longer sentences involves speech planning communicative in function

How do we code-switch?

Inter-sentential

Swahili-English

That's too much. *Sina pesa.*

“... I don't have [much] money.”

(Myers-Scotton 1993a:41)

Insertion

Persian-Swedish

xob pas *falsk-an* pesa-â

well then false-COP3PL boy-PL

“Well then boys are false.”

(Naseh Lotfabbadi 2002:101)

Intra-sentential

Spanish-English

Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish [sic] *y termino en español*

“... and I finish in Spanish.”

Impossible

English-Russian

Я love **мою** mother **очень** much.

I-NOM love *my-ACC* mother *very-adv.* much

“I love my mother very much”

Code-switching
does not violate
any of the
grammars

1

I like this *camisa-fem púrpura-fem*.
I like this purple shirt

2

**El* bought some ice-cream
He bought some ice-cream

3

I love *mamy-Acc*.
I love my mom

Persian-Swedish

xob pas *falsk-an* pesa-â

well then false-COP3PL boy-PL

“Well then boys are false.”

- *Grammar rules are observed in every example*

In all cultural contexts



- Language is a mental state which undergoes constant updates
- Nothing in the human brain blocks acquisition of a new language at any point of time
 - There may be aging effects
- None of the acquired languages can be completely deactivated at any point of time

*Thank
you*

