The Development of Language and Language Researchers: Essays in Honor of Roger Brown

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As a Sophomore at Harvard College in the fall of 1972, I was certain of my goal in life, but uncertain as to how to achieve it. I had just returned to school after a year off, which I spent performing odd jobs in Japan. Mostly, I spent the year taking advantage of my bilingual skills in English and Japanese. The goal that I envisioned for myself on completion of my Bachelor's degree was to go back to Japan and to go into the English-teaching business, of the Berlitz type. It was (and still is) a lucrative business in Japan. Having grown up in an entrepreneurial family environment, the conditions appeared right, both in terms of market demands and in terms of my skills and dispositions.

It was less clear to me how to build the necessary credentials to start a successful English-teaching enterprise in Japan. I tossed the idea around with my undergraduate advisor, John Marquand, who immediately convinced me that I should begin by unbinding ties with my previously declared major in government. Through mental routes that I cannot reconstruct any more, I wound up with the decision that the best "sales route" for an English-teaching program in Japan would be to claim that it is based on research on how children learn their native language. John Marquand suggested that I look into linguistics and into psychology and social relations as possible majors. He mentioned that a professor named Roger Brown worked in language. I also distinctly recall him trying to remember the name of a professor at MIT, who wrote books about the Vietnam war but who also worked on language. I felt that through the combined study of psychology and linguistics I would find out how children learn language, and that I would be able to dovetail this knowledge into my business career in Japan.

The first course I took in the area of language development was taught by
Donald Olivier. There I was exposed to, among other things, a preprint of Roger Brown’s *A First Language*. As an impressionable undergraduate, the feeling of privilege in getting a sneak preview to a yet-to-be-published book (by a Harvard professor) was overwhelming. I read every word carefully, and, as I later found out is true of almost everything that Roger has written, I felt that I had learned not just the information contents of the study described, but a style of thinking and writing as well. In my mind, I reenacted (many times over) the course of the study and the analyses that he and his students had performed.

An opportunity to apply what I had learned from the preprint arrived shortly. For my course project for Don Olivier, I collected spontaneous speech samples from my very own subject. My subject, like Adam, Eve, and Sarah, had the same task ahead of her, namely to learn English. However, unlike Roger’s prototypes, my subject (named Uguisu) was 5 years old and was a native speaker of Japanese (the daughter of a visiting scholar family from Japan). I wrote a brief paper for the course, describing the first few samples of her English.

With the school year coming to a close and with Uguisu’s English rapidly progressing, I approached Don Olivier for suggestions about how to continue collecting data from my second-language learner. As a student with no money to buy tapes, I wondered whether the department had resources to lend me some tapes. To my amazement, he offered to introduce me to Roger Brown, who might be able to help. I was a bit intimidated by the suggestion because he only existed in my mind as a preprint, which was a comfortable distance. A few days later I received a phone call from a man identifying himself as Roger Brown. He sounded like what I had expected from the preprint. I made an appointment to see him.

On the day of the appointment, I was nervous. His secretary, the unforgettable (late) Esther Sorocka, must have sensed this in me, and she managed to calm me down. By the time I was introduced to Roger Brown, I was ready with my demands. I wanted some cassette tapes and possibly the use of a good quality tape recorder. To my surprise one of the first things he offered was to pity me as a research assistant to continue collecting the data. I had not expected this as within the realm of possibilities. I was stunned but recovered in time to accept the kind offer (but not sufficiently recovered to demand my tapes). After the appointment, I immediately proceeded to resign from my two part-time jobs as a gardener and as a restaurant bus boy. This was the launching of my career in developmental psycholinguistic research. The heat of the excitement of research masked all vestiges of my original goal, of starting an English school in Japan.

The remainder of my undergraduate career was spent following Uguisu and writing up the findings under Roger’s guidance (in addition to the support provided by my other mentor, Jill de Villiers, who was then a graduate student). I was tutored through his legendary longhand comments on my papers, comments that addressed not just content but issues of expository style as well. I remember particularly well his advice on how to add dramatic flair, even to the most bland results I obtained.

For graduate school I chose the path of least resistance and remained in the lively, nurturant, safe environment created by Roger at Harvard. I collaborated on some work on first-language acquisition of English with Jill de Villiers and Helen Tager-Flusberg. Although I enjoyed every minute of my work with Jill and Helen, I must admit that working on English L1 acquisition left me unfulfilled in the sense that I was not realizing the full potential of my knowledge of two languages. For example, we were struggling with some hypotheses about English relative clauses (de Villiers, Tager-Flusberg, Hakuta, & Cohen, 1979; Sheldon, 1974), but it was apparent that the competing hypotheses were confounded in English. It occurred to me that Japanese would nicely disentangle such problems. Much of my original research during graduate school thus took me down the road of Japanese L1 acquisition (Hakuta, 1981, 1982a), an effort that Roger categorically applauded. This move did have its drawbacks, such as the fact that I found myself spending a lot of time in graduate school explaining the structure of Japanese to my colleagues and teachers. I succeeded in putting practically the entire faculty to sleep during my dissertation oral examinations. In the United States, there is a certain advantage to the line, “Take any language, say, English. . . .”

For me personally, the legacy of Roger Brown is best captured by his infinitely expansive mind. From his prototypes, Adam, Eve, and Sarah, I created variants: second-language learners and learners of Japanese. He welcomed both of these with open arms (in a way that I suspect he would not have encouraged the cloning of Adam, Eve, and Sarah). As his student, I do not feel constrained to stay within the boundaries of a methodology or area of research in order to obtain his approval. Roger’s own research and writings reflect this freedom. To paraphrase, everything from the albino mouse to the American soldier is fair game, as long as it is interesting and informative.

My major change in research emphasis since obtaining my doctorate and taking a job at Yale might be summarized in the following way. The content has shifted, from a specific behavior (language) varying over subjects, to a specific class of subjects (bilinguals) varying over a range of behaviors. I have become interested in creating an integrated picture of bilinguals that is not limited to their linguistic capabilities. How is bilingualism used as a label for political status? What is the cognitive state of a bilingual? What are the social conditions that are overlaid with bilingualism? I am trying to make a case for the problem of bilingualism as an agenda for psychological research; where better a place than in a volume that celebrates the career of a renaissance psychologist? 

The importance of understanding the bilingual for society (I hereafter refer both to individuals in the process of becoming bilingual and to those who have achieved some degree of stability in their bilingualism collectively as “bilingual”; “sec-
...is apparent from some simple demographic figures. One estimate in the United States finds that there were 1,723,000 children between the ages of 5 and 14 enrolled in various instructional programs who were classified as having "Limited English Proficiency" in 1978 (O'Malley, 1978). If you add to this number the children who are proficient in English but who nevertheless speak another language at home, the total grows to 3,097,000. Long-term forecasts suggest substantial increases in these numbers in the future (Oxford et al., 1980). Children aside, the number of adult immigrants to the United States is expected to increase. All these men, women, and children can be considered at risk of unfair treatment by a generally monolingual American society through, for example, inadequate educational or employment opportunities.

Bilingualism is hardly a recent phenomenon in the United States (Kloss, 1977), but it has become a prominent issue in the past 20 years through the combined emergence of ethnic pride and of growing concern that children who did not speak English at home were lagging behind in school. Various remedies to the latter problem included "bilingual education" (a misnomer in the sense that almost all such programs in the United States aim not at maintaining the child's native language, but rather at assisting in the transition to instruction conducted solely in English), about which there are more myths and beliefs than reliable facts. We lack such basic information as how children actually learn English in these programs, what determines whether they maintain or lose their first language, and how effective the programs actually are. The extreme tentativeness of our knowledge is revealed in the vulnerability of bilingual education policy to arguments by critics whose primary merit appears to be a gift for rhetoric (Epstein, 1977; Rodriguez, 1982). I say this not as an advocate of bilingual education (which I am), but rather as a research psychologist frustrated by the lack of a knowledge base from which to address the issues that the debate over bilingualism raises.

Bilingualism as an issue is of course not restricted to the United States. The "guestworker" situation in Europe has reached explosive proportions. There are currently an estimated 14 to 15 million such immigrants in Western Europe (Rist, 1979). In West Germany and France, more than 10% of the labor force consists of foreign workers, mostly from countries in the Mediterranean region. Contrary to popular belief, primarily for economic reasons these workers have little prospect of returning to their native country. They often bring their families with them, and the educational problems of their children are a major concern. There are now 5 million immigrant children in the industrialized Western European countries (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1978). An estimate for UNESCO by Skutnabb-Kangas (1978) suggests that "a third of the young European population in the year 2000 is going to have immigrant background" (p. 228).

To these we must add the mass emigrations produced by war and political upheaval in Southeast Asia and the widely established norms of societal multilingualism in much of the world. In much of East Africa, for example, Swahili is the common language that permits communication and some degree of political unity among speakers of a large number of local languages, whereas the colonial language (English) is still used for many official government purposes, such as high court proceedings (Harries, 1976; O'Barr & O'Barr, 1976, pp. 31–136; Polome & Hill, 1980).

The facts just cited serve two purposes. First, they show concretely that bilingualism is a significant social issue. Second, they show that the phenomenon of bilingualism engages a substantial proportion of the population of humans to whom we as psychologists should address our theory and research.

Rather than belabor the question of social relevance, I make the case that the very process of conducting research on bilingualism can shed light on basic issues in psychology. Moreover, this process can lead researchers to an appreciation of the breadth and variety of human behavior, thus helping remedy the prevailing specialization and narrowness in psychology.

The first section that follows provides a brief historical account of the status of research with bilingual subjects in American psychology. In the second section, I focus on trends in developmental psycholinguistics and speculate on the theoretical status of second-language learners in that context. In the third section, evidence is presented to suggest that second-language acquisition in both adults and children is strikingly similar to first-language acquisition. In the fourth section, I suggest some ways in which various specialties might benefit from the inclusion of bilingual subjects in their research. I conclude by arguing that research focused on bilingualism can lead to a more integrated social science.

THE POLITICAL STATUS OF THE BILINGUAL SUBJECT

Tracy Kendler (1950) discusses a statute in Hawaii, passed in 1943, prohibiting the teaching of "foreign" languages (i.e., languages other than English) to children under the age of 10. The statute was based on the belief that "the study and persistent use of foreign languages by children of average intelligence in their early . . . years definitely detract from their ability to understand and assimilate their normal studies in the English language [and] may and do, in many cases, cause serious emotional disturbances, conflicts and maladjustments" (p. 505).

Indeed, many American studies in the early 1900s did obtain results that, on their face, suggested that bilingualism had evil consequences. Typically, such studies compared a group of "bilingual" children with a group of "monolingual" children on some psychometric tests of intelligence. The failure of these studies to control for such obvious variables as socioeconomic level and the true...
bilingualism" of the children (one study used the child's last name as an indicator of bilingualism) has made these results difficult to interpret (see Diaz, 1983, for a thorough review). Furthermore, most of the tests were administered in English and were designed for testing monolingual, English-speaking Americans, whereas most of the "bilingual" subjects were children of recent immigrants. Although most current researchers consider these early studies unusable, the findings were consonant enough with prevailing beliefs for their implications to be synthesized and discussed in other social sciences, such as sociology (Shibutani & Kwan, 1965, p. 529).

As these studies suggest, for American psychologists bilingualism has been an issue only in relation to lower socioeconomic groups with educational problems, and so the study of bilingualism was (and by and large still is) associated with remedial efforts. By contrast, the Canadian approach to the study of bilingual children is striking and instructive. Whereas in the United States the problem was to educate minority-language children in the majority language (English), the Canadian problem was to help children of the majority culture (English) achieve functional skills in an increasingly powerful minority language (French). From the conflict perspective in sociology, one can interpret the Canadian situation as an attempt by the majority group to maintain its status in a bilingual situation as an attempt by the majority group to maintain its status in a general "cognitive flexibility," reflected in a variety of verbal and nonverbal tests that require mental manipulation of a stimulus field. Study of bilingualism has been a respectable and theoretically profitable enterprise in social sciences, such as sociology (Shibutani & Kwan, 1965, p. 529).

Social biases aside, there were other confounding reasons why the bilingual individual was of little interest to the American psychologist. Here, I focus on the issue of language acquisition, a research topic to which second-language (L2) acquisition and bilingualism are very germane. There were two reasons that in turn functioned to dispel interest in looking at the second-language learner to understand the human capacity for language.

The standard history of interest in language acquisition in children goes something like this. Up through Chomsky's (1957) revolution in linguistics, studies of language development in children were of two kinds: studies that were intent on establishing age-norms for various "countable" aspects of language, such as vocabulary; and studies that were somewhat eclectic diaries of children's language development, mostly of the researcher's own child (including one by Charles Darwin published in 1877). American psychology under the heavy influence of behaviorism considered verbal behavior no different than other behaviors, one that could be measured and accounted for by familiar variables like response strength and contiguity.

Because the learning of the first language (L1) consisted of forming a set of "habits," the second-language learner had to overcome the first-language habits. Where the two languages differed (grammatically, phonologically, and so forth), difficulties would be encountered, and this was seen to be the major obstacle for the second-language learner. In this sense, L2 learning was very unlike L1 learning. Although L2 learning would be worthwhile studying in its own right for pedagogical purposes, there was no reason why it should yield insights into the nature of L1 learning.

When Chomsky convincingly rejected the simplistic view of language as something like a Markovian process, claiming that it was innate in human beings (a "mental organ"), things changed. The "habit" reason for excluding L2 learners no longer being tenable, biology came into the picture. Most notably, it appeared in the form of Eric Lenneberg's synthesis (1967), and the biological analogy was adopted into some descriptions of children's language. Brown and Bellugi-Klima (1964) wrote: "the very intricate simultaneous differentiation and integration that constitutes the evolution of the noun phrase (in children) is more reminiscent of the biological development of an embryo than it is of the acquisition of a conditional reflex" (p. 150). If language acquisition is considered a biological process bounded by maturational factors (the upper bound being at puberty), the implication is that L2 acquisition would involve a different process. Lenneberg claimed, for example, that a second language is learned by resorting to the language skills acquired in childhood (p. 176). For the social reasons outlined in the first section of this chapter and the theoretical considerations (the habit account and the maturational account) mentioned here, the L2 learner elicited little interest among psychologists. Most data...
on L2 learning come from research conducted by applied linguists interested in teaching, but their findings suggest that psycholinguists would do well to study the L2 learner, perhaps with improvements in research methodology.

Is the Second-Language Learner So Different?
Roger Brown (1973a) proposed that the errors made by adult L2 learners be compared with those made by child L1 learners. He did so while suggesting that second-language acquisition among adults might be subject to more traditional learning processes than the seemingly "automatic" acquisition of a first language by children.

The answers to his question already existed, but not in a literature traditionally read by psychologists. An active subfield of applied linguistics is "error analysis," in which the systematic deviations from target language norms observed in the learner are classified by their hypothesized source (Corder, 1967, 1971). One robust finding from this area, which spans errors made by adults as well as children, and in both formal and informal learning environments, is that the kinds of errors made by L2 learners are strikingly similar to those reported for L1 children. The most common errors are those of simplification, such as omission of noun and verb inflections, and overregularization, e.g., using the regular past tense ending in English for irregular verbs (Dulay & Burt, 1973, 1974; Duskova, 1969; Politzer & Ramirez, 1973).

The discovery that the overwhelming majority of errors are shared by L1 and L2 learners led to the abandonment of an almost axiomatic belief of applied linguists, stated by Charles Ferguson, that "one of the major problems in the learning of a second language is the interference caused by the structural differences between the native language of the learner and the second language." (Preface to Stockwell, Bowen, & Martin, 1965; p. vi), an approach called contrastive analysis. Errors of transfer from the native language, whereas extremely interesting in their own right, turned out to be quite infrequent. Rather, regardless of one's native language, L2 acquisition seemed to proceed in its own systematic way.

This conclusion was supported both by studies pointing to similarities in error types and by studies that compared the overall patterns of development, such as specific structures that were analyzed in detail. In addition, even the dissimilarities did not appear to derive from negative transfer from the native language. For example, a number of studies now exist that look at the "order of acquisition" of grammatical morphemes, generally following the procedures set by Brown (1973b) for L1 learners. The general conclusion of these studies is that the order for L2 learners is different from that of L1 learners, but that it is the same for L2 learners of different native-language backgrounds. In addition, the same order is observed for both child and adult L2 learners. This matrix of findings suggests that, whereas L2 acquisition may not always recapitulate the exact sequence of L1 acquisition, the process in large part excludes interference from the native language.

To assert the similarities between L1 and L2 acquisition is not to claim they are identical. Nor do I mean to imply that there is no transfer from the native language. Transfer errors, when found, are extremely interesting and useful for theory building (Hakuta & Cancino, 1977). So are some apparent differences in L1 and L2 learners, such as the fact that L2 learners in their initial stages of learning use a large number of "prefabricated" or "formulaic" utterances that have no internal structure but are used in social interaction (Hakuta, 1974; Wong-Fillmore, 1979). A simple example of this is a tourist's memorizing a sentence from a phrase book ("Can you tell me where the station is?"") without understanding what the individual words mean. These prefabrications are also used by L1 learners (Clark, 1974), but less extensively than by L2 learners. This difference suggests that there are social-context differences in the two processes, which may prove to be important. Nevertheless, the end products are the same. Both sets of learners must crack the linguistic code of their target language (Macnamara, 1976).

Lenneberg's (1967) somewhat offhand remark, that "automatic acquisition from mere exposure to a given language seems to disappear (after puberty)" (p. 176) must be rejected. At present, the evidence is overwhelming that there are no categorical changes in the capacity for L2 learning at puberty, which would be predicted by a maturational argument. Rather, although there appears to be a gradual decline in ultimate attainment with increasing age, the decline appears to be linear (Oyama, 1976, 1978; Patkowski, 1980). In addition, there is some evidence indicating that older children and adults learn a second language at a faster rate, with the possible exception of accent, than younger children (Snow & Hoeftnegel-Hohle, 1978; Krashen, Long, & Scarcella, 1979), although the evidence is inevitably confounded with age-related changes in test-taking ability (see Hakuta, 1983). Also, the critical-period hypothesis leaves unexplained the similarities, such as in the kinds of errors made, that are in fact found between prepubescent and postpubescent second-language learners.

Taken together, recent findings suggest that there are many parallels between L1 and L2 acquisition, and that the best working hypothesis is that the two processes are similar in most respects, a view espoused by a number of researchers (Dulay & Burt, 1974; Ervin-Tripp, 1974; Macnamara, 1976). This is a remarkable conclusion if one believes (as most people do) that the cognitive systems of children and adults are different. It is not as surprising if one believes that language acquisition is relatively autonomous from the general conceptual system. In any event, the study of the second-language learner will highlight important issues in developmental psycholinguistics.

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss some implications that including the L2 learner in the pool of legitimate subjects for psychological research would have.
for various domains of the general discipline. These suggestions are intended
only to open various lines of inquiry, not to exhaust them.

DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

A major endeavor of developmental psychology is to arrive at age-independent
descriptions of change in particular domains of mind and behavior; that is, one
hopes to characterize development not in terms of a particular child's age, but
rather in terms of the kinds of changes in different processes that take place over
time. Piaget's description of the development of symbolic activities into log-
ico-mathematical structures is a good example.

One problem in achieving such descriptions without regard to age is that, in
the developing child, many of the relevant variables are correlated with age.
There are age-related changes in memory, perception, conceptual structure, so-
cial cognition, and language, to mention but a few. When it comes time for
explanation, it is easy to attribute the observed changes in a particular domain to
any of these variables. I have in mind such controversies as the debate between
Chomsky and Piagetian views on the nature of the relationship between lan-
guage and general cognitive development (Pirolli-Palmarini, 1980). Within de-
velopmental psycholinguistics, this controversy is reflected in the numerous
attempts in the 1970s to explain away language acquisition on the basis of
cognitive development (Beilin, 1976; Cromer, 1974; Macnamara, 1972; Slobin,
1973).

An advantage of looking at second-language learners is that one can look at
language acquisition apart from cognitive development. If we find in the cog-
nitively mature L2 learner the same kinds of things we find in L1 learners, it
becomes difficult to attribute the findings to cognitive development alone. At the
same time, we will probably find dissimilarities in the L2 data that support the
cognitive development hypothesis. As examples of the first possibility, there is
evidence suggesting that L2 learners process passives (Ervin-Tripp, 1974), inter-
rogatives (Raven, 1968), relative clauses (Gass & Arndt, 1980), and complex
complementizer structures (d'Anglejan & Tucker, 1975) in much the same way
as L1 children. In Ervin-Tripp's study, subjects were English-speaking children
learning French in France. Raven's was a case study of his 5-year-old Nor-
wegian-speaking son learning English. Gass and Arndt's study involved adults of
various native-language backgrounds enrolled in English-language courses at the
University of Michigan. D'Anglejan and Tucker looked at Francophone military
personnel attending an English language course at an army base. In my opinion,
these are widely different groups from which a consistent pattern of results has
emerged.

The second possibility, that we can attribute many L1 findings to cognitive
development, is illustrated by Lightbown's (1977) analysis of the semantic rela-
tions expressed in the early stages of L2 acquisition in children. She found that
they were not limited to the kinds of relations reported in L1 children (outlined
by Bloom, 1970, and summarized in Brown, 1973b, including meanings such as
agent-action, attribute-entity, and possessor-possessed), which suggests that
L1 children are limited by their cognitive repertoire. In addition, there are good
indications that the emergence of sentence coordination (propositions joined by
conjunctions such as and, because, and if) in L1 children is constrained by con-
ceptual or processing-capacity limitations (Bloom, Lahey, Hood, Lifter, &
Fiess, 1980): Such structures appear in the earliest stages of L2 acquisition
(Hakuta, 1982b).

The number of studies is still quite limited (see Hatch, 1978, for a collection
of major studies), but they suffice to indicate that studying the L2 learner will
help us separate the respective roles of cognitive developmental factors and
linguistically unique factors in the acquisition of language.

A stirring of interest in bilingualism might also enliven some new areas in the
emerging study of developmental psychology from the life-span perspective.
Carol Ryff (personal communication) points out that many of the older subjects
she has interviewed in her own studies are bilingual. Because of the successive
waves of immigration to the United States, the same would probably be true of
most samples of elderly Americans, yet Ryff notes that bilingualism is a term
unfamiliar to life-span psychologists. Because changes in the linguistic circum-
cstances of an individual are related in many cases to other major life changes,
some problems addressed by life-span psychologists might be productively artic-
ulated in terms of language acquisition as an anchor point in a life history; this
would of course be more relevant in some populations than in others. Correla-
tions of language with life change may involve immigration to a culture speaking
a different language, marriage to a spouse whose native language is different (see
Sorensen, 1967 for an anthropological account of a culture where this is the
norm), and offspring who bring home a second language, as in the case of
Hispanic children in the United States who bring home English as they become
more dominant in that language through schools. These instances would sharply
delineate issues such as adjustment to changes primarily beyond one's control,
shared values with one's intimates, and the intrusion by society into family
dynamics. Because language is symbolic of an individual's identity (Guirao,
Bramon, & Dull, 1972; Nida, 1971), there are rather broad implications for the
study of humans from the life-course perspective. Conversely, the study of
second-language acquisition can gain perspective from typological frameworks
being developed by life-span psychologists for life events, where events are
classified by properties such as the degree of correlation with age and the ex-
pected probability of their occurrence (Brim & Ryff, 1980).
Social and Personality Psychology

More explicitly defined by the function of the individual, Social and Personality Psychology is concerned with the study of the individual within a group or society.

The term is used to describe the relationship between an individual and their environment, focusing on the factors that influence behavior and personality development. This includes the study of group dynamics, social influences, and the impact of social structures on individual behavior.

This field explores how people interact with each other, how they form and maintain relationships, and how these interactions shape their personal and social development. It also examines how cultural, social, and economic factors influence individual behavior and decision-making.

Cognitive Psychology

Cognitive Psychology is concerned with the mental processes involved in learning, remembering, thinking, perceiving, problem-solving, and decision-making. It investigates how people process information and how they transform that information into knowledge and understanding.

This field examines the strategies and mechanisms by which people encode, store, and retrieve information, as well as how they use this information to make decisions and solve problems. It also explores the role of emotions and beliefs in shaping cognitive processes.

The study of cognitive psychology has been driven by the desire to understand the mind as a complex, dynamic system with a rich mental life governed by the rules of logic, memory, and attention. It seeks to explain how people think, learn, and perceive the world around them.
language learning in high school students. It may turn out that second-language learners provide an ideal laboratory population in which to study the relative contributions of social and personality variables as predictors of behavior.

One reason for this is the robustness of the behavior in question, namely language. William Labov (1966) showed a number of years ago how strong a social marker language is. One can practically reconstruct the social stratification of a city from language data alone. The point of relevance here is that degree of second-language acquisition (and there is considerable variation across individuals) is easily and reliably measured and reflects and varies predictably with a rather broad range of social interactional contexts. Sociolinguistic research (see Fishman, Cooper, & Ma, 1971) has uncovered differential language use by functional social domains, such as home, work, and religion. Such sociological categories might be useful to the social psychologist.

CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

Many would not consider “cross-cultural psychology” to be a traditional area of study, but I include it to underscore what is perhaps the most important contribution the study of second-language learners would make to psychology: It will of necessity force on us a cross-cultural psychology.

The obvious reason is that second-language learners are necessarily becoming bilingual (to varying extents), and an account of their repertoire of behavior will include how they handle and manage two cultural “systems.” As a psycholinguist, I can testify that American psycholinguists act almost as if English were the only language in existence. Properties about “language” are posited on the basis of the study of English speakers alone. Similar arguments can be made for other areas of psychology; my only point here is that the second-language learner, by virtue of forcing a consideration of cross-cultural issues, will keep us honest in limiting our generalizations to the appropriate population.

INTERDISCIPLINARY PROSPECTS

The research activities of social scientists might be broadly classified as either “theory-driven” or “subject-driven” work. This simpleminded distinction is meant to point up the ways research topics are chosen, with the choice depending on whether the researcher’s main emphasis is on theory testing and elaboration or on understanding a population that is of special interest for practical or personal reasons. The choice of subjects in theory-driven research is largely determined by a convenience criterion, be it control of extraneous factors (pure genetic strains in laboratory animals), easy availability (college sophomores in an introductory psychology course), or the performance of “critical tests” of specific hypotheses (using an established experimental paradigm with abnormal subjects, such as aphasics). This is in contrast to subject-driven research, where one tries to relate a specific subject population to whatever relevant theories are available to provide insightful accounts of interesting subject characteristics. Research on the second-language learner and bilingual falls in the latter category.

Measured in terms of academic prestige, theory-driven research wins. This is because theory-driven research generally is associated with “pure” research, subject-driven with “applied.” At this point in the history of the social sciences, however, it seems more important to judge the value of research on the basis of its ability to integrate different areas of work. Compartmentalization and specialization (even within the subdomains of psychology) have led to minitheories explaining phenomena that at best may generalize to situations outside the laboratory, but that have scant hope of proving relevant to other minitheories. Because it is beyond our imagination how a theoretically tight system of the social sciences might be achieved (encompassing emotional and cognitive processes within an individual within multiple levels of social structure within macropolitical structures), a theoretical midwife is needed, which arrives in the form of subject-driven research.

The study of second-language learners, in individual psychological processes and in sociological and political ones (Fishman’s seminal works should be consulted here), can be seen as a special case of such subject-driven research. Eclectic attempts to account for the multifaceted aspects of bilingualism may not directly lead to an integrated theoretical perspective (which is why it is a midwife), but it will help set the stage for the dissolution of the artificial boundaries created by the specialization of psychology.

In concluding, I suggest a few integrative questions that could be answered by applying ourselves to second-language learners and bilinguals. References to some relevant (though not necessarily integrative) works are cited.

1. How does bilingualism affect cognitive functioning quantitatively and qualitatively, and does the effect vary with individual difference variables (e.g., age, “intelligence”), and with group variables (e.g., societal values placed on bilingualism; Cummins, 1976; Hakuta & Diaz, in press; Lambert, 1978; Peal & Lambert, 1962)?

2. How are the two languages of the bilingual related to the social-interactional domains in which they are differentially used? How are they integrated within the cognitive system of the individual (Albert & Obler, 1978; Ervin & Osgood, 1954)? On the societal level, how are the two languages influenced by the political processes frequently reflected in language boundaries (Blom & Gumperz, 1972; Fishman, 1978; Hymes, 1972; O’Barr & O’Barr, 1976; Schernerhorn, 1970)?

3. How is the human capacity to acquire language related to adult develop-
ment and aging? Is the change in capacity best seen as the result of gradual cognitive decrements, such as loss of memory capacities, or as the result of affective/social changes in the course of the human life span (Krashen, Scarcella, & Long, 1982; Schumann, 1975)?

4. How do linguistic structures interact in the mind of the bilingual? Can these effects be understood using linguistic models from language typology and universals (e.g., Comrie, 1981; Greenberg, 1978), in such a way that the psychological reality of linguistic parameters can be verified (Hakuta, in press)?

Each set of questions offers a focus for the interaction of different social science domains. The answers will require the recruitment of knowledge and methodology from the areas of psychology mentioned in this chapter, and additionally, from anthropology, sociology, political science, and linguistics. I do not hesitate to make such a bold statement that advocates a form of (subject-)guided eclecticism, in part, because as a role model Roger Brown has shown me that it is the questions you ask that matter, not particular methodologies constrained by such formalities as dean’s categories and professional associations. And in the case of bilingualism, you end up having to go all over the place.

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I. Introduction

II. The Case of Relative Clauses in Japanese

III. Empathy and Second Language Learning

IV. Prefabricated Patterns and Emergence of Structure

V. Grammatical Description and Configurational Arrangement

VI. Interaction between Particles and Word Order in Comprehension and Production of Simple Sentences

VII. The Second Language Learner in the Context of Study of Language Acquisition

VIII. A Critical Discussion and Some New Longitudinal Data

IX. Conclusion

References


Social psychologists interested in language and nonverbal communication are increasing as the discipline moves toward integrating these topics into studies of more traditional social psychological areas (e.g., identity formation and change, socialization, group processes, social cognition, and development of the self). My exposure to and fascination with language are due to the influence and careful guidance of Roger Brown. Roger’s early scholarly inquiries in social psychology reflect his astute insights about language; his perceptions of how language acts as an agent of social stratification, social change, and socialization. His initial work also is indicative of his formal training in social psychology. Although Roger has devoted his recent research to developmental psycholinguistics, his influence on my studies of social psychology has been substantial. In many ways, my goals in studying social psychology and language have been similar to those of most psycholinguists: to understand the relation between language and development.

I have always sensed that there was a connection between who I am and how I express myself. I realized that how people interact with me, the language and topics they select, what they choose to disclose or not disclose, and how they express themselves when interacting with me communicates something to me about who I am and, more specifically, who I am relative to them. I have