

Early bilingualism and bilingual acquisition: what do we know of *bilingual first language acquisition* (BFLA)?

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Abstract

In the present study we are going to focus on the area of early bilingualism and bilingual acquisition but especially on what has been studied as Bilingual First Language Acquisition (BFLA) for last twenty years while referring to a child's regular exposure to two languages after birth and during the first years of life (cf. De Houwer 1990, 2009).

The revision of bilingual acquisition literature (cf. references) shows that specific implications for bilingual acquisition include traditionally the questions of (i) whether originally a bilingual child had one or two linguistic systems, (ii) what criteria should be used in identifying one versus two systems, (iii) what the most important determinants of language choice are for the developing bilingual, and – specifically – (iv) if there is a specific mixed period phase in BFLA acquisition (cf. Deuchar & Quay, 2000).

Nevertheless, if the main aim of bilingual acquisition case studies is to explore its implications for linguistic theory, monolingual theorisation is believed to be the main reason for all the misunderstanding of bilingual acquisition centred research. Unlike the traditional consensus in research on bilingualism which approaches the use of two languages from the perspective of one of them or of a merged version of both, the BFLA studies take early bilingual speech as an instance of the use of language and not of the use of particular languages opening the way to quite

different conclusions about bilingualism and shifting the research focus from the product towards the process of acquisition of the child's system in the making.

References

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