

Report on dimensions of bilingualism

[Sociology](#), [Population](#)



Summary

Defining the term “bilingualism” is easier said than done; and the same goes for defining who is a bilingual. According to the definitions provided, there are variables that can be used to describe bilingualism: age and manner of acquisition, proficiency level in specific languages, domains of language use, self-identification and attitude. Bilingualism is actually a product of language contact, which is a phenomenon wherein members of a population become forced or become unconditionally exposed to a set of factors that leads to their exposure to two or more languages. There are literally a hundred of ways to define bilingualism and this supposition can be backed by the numerous types of bilingualism (e. g. consecutive bilingual, late bilingual, maximal bilingual, passive bilingual, natural bilingual, etc.) To better establish the scope and meaning of bilingualism, a discussion of the operational definition of language was provided and arbitrated. One way how language was scoped and defined in the paper was as a systematic combination of smaller units into larger units to create meaning. Language was then differentiated with dialect based on the two criteria, size and prestige. In general, language is larger in size and is more prestigious than a dialect. Languages are not only meant to be used for communication purposes because they surely have other purposes. A language can define a population or even an entire country’s identity. Language can be a very influential factor in terms of a country or a population’s sociopolitical identification. Additionally, language may also define or reveal a speaker’s relationships with other people or where he currently stands in the social ladder. So what does it really mean to be a bilingual? Drawing in other

significant factors that may influence the way how we can successfully and accurately define bilingualism, the author of the paper has concluded that bilingualism is not a static and unitary phenomenon, which is why it is so complex to define and insisting on coming up with a clear and concrete definition would only lead to even more problems. But one thing, according to the author is certain and that is as more and more people in the world learn more than one language, bilingualism will stay as long as we humans walk in this planet.

Analysis

I did not find any problems with the way how the author presented the problem and the way how he came up with an answer. However, I do have some objections regarding his definition of the variables affecting bilingualism, specifically, the age and manner of acquisition. In this part of his paper, he tries to debunk the common belief that the age and manner of the acquisition of a particular language have bearing on the proficiency level of the individual in specific languages. Even though it was stated in the paper that there are literatures that could support this idea, the author nonetheless failed to provide concrete examples of official academic journals that could prove this claim. Researches have shown that children aged between 2 to 7 years learn languages significantly faster than an adult can and this reason alone can falsify what the author of the dimensions of bilingualism paper was trying to suggest. However, he was not entirely wrong in that part because inconsistent use of a language, even though it was learned at an early age could negatively affect the way how an individual uses a particular language; and learning a language even after the

early stages of life with a high level of proficiency, could still be possible, provided that it is consistently used and practiced.

References

Wei, L. (2003). *The Bilingualism Reader*. Taylor and Francis.