

Cross-linguistic influence in early bilingualism

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In this class/workshop, we will look at cross-linguistic influence in early bilingual language acquisition, i.e., cases in which two languages are or were acquired during early childhood (ages 0-6 years). We will start out by introducing key terms and myths on bilingualism (Who is a heritage speakers? What is the difference between cross-linguistic influence and transfer? Early is better. The 1-Person/1-Language strategy leads to balanced bilingualism), as well as current debates (e.g. Are heritage speakers are incomplete learners?). We will contextualize current debates in a historical overview of research on child bilinguals, introducing the Single System Hypothesis (e.g., Volterra & Taeschner 1978) and the Autonomy Hypothesis (e.g. Meisel 1986, Genesee 1989), before moving on to more recent research on the linguistic factors that determine cross-linguistic influence and/or language acquisition outcomes. Examples for this class will be drawn from the domain of morpho-syntax (e.g. the acquisition of gender) and phonology (e.g. Voice Onset Time) and various language combinations (e.g. German-Italian, German-French, German-Russian).