TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF CODE SWITCHING AND INTERLANGUAGE IN BILINGUALITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR BILINGUAL INSTRUCTION

Luisa Duran

Note: Every attempt has been made to maintain the integrity of the printed text. In some cases, figures and tables have been reconstructed within the constraints of the electronic environment.

Introduction

This paper attempts to help teachers involved in bilingual instruction come to a better understanding of two important aspects of the whole process of bilingual development. Developmental knowledge should aid instructional knowledge, and instructional knowledge should aid development.

The two major aspects of the bilingual development process which will be outlined here are the notion of interlanguage and the notion of code-switching. It is important that these nonnormative aspects of bilingual development be understood better from linguistic perspectives. There seems to be much misunderstanding of these two phenomena and how to treat them in the classroom.

Before a focus on interlanguage and code-switching is done, it is important to summarize what we know about language in its broadest and most varied forms, that is, in its monolingual, bilingual, multilingual forms, and all the stages of each.

Commonality of All Language Forms

The language development process is a creative process if it is anything at all. The latest accounts on language development across cultures underscore the notion of an orderly and systematic linguistic process which is half imitation and half invention (Pfaff, 1987; Berko-Gleason, 1993; Edmundson, 1985). At the same time that language development is orderly and systematic it is also complete yet not totally complete. While it does arrive at significant consolidations, accomplishments, and achievements (what we may call stages), Durkin et al. (1986) say that these "will be subjected to addition, elaboration, refinement, re application and re-organization in the years ahead" (p. ix). Acquisition or development as both a synchronic (short term) and as a diachronic (long-term) process is now better understood by those who study language. Because we have come to understand both the continuous and discontinuous characteristics of language development we have also begun to focus our attention on both the normative

and the nonnormative patterns of language behavior along this more holistic continuum. Nonnormative forms of language are now a major focus of linguistic study in monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual development. What was and still is many times thought of by lay people as "strange," "deviant," "confusing," or "broken" language is being appreciated by linguists, psycholinguists, and sociolinguists as part of the total natural language development and acquisition process. Continued research efforts in this area, along with the traditional normative focus, are yielding a portrait of language development which may be more accurate and more helpful to many but especially to those concerned with how to support the natural capacities and learning strategies of language learners. This may lead us to a more holistic and robust explanation and description of the language development or the language learning/ acquisition continuum, spiral, or cycle across the life span, across cultures, and across situations, contexts, and domains.

We will now look at two examples of nonnormative linguistic behavior found in both developing bilinguals and in more developed ones. The term nonnormative is used here to mean those aspects of language behavior which are not seen as normal as other language forms by most lay people. In bilinguality there is the more general notion which linguists call cross-linguistic interaction or cross linguistic influence. While several particular forms of cross-linguistic interactions are found in the literature, I will review only two in this paper, interlanguage and code-switching, and only in an introductory way.

The Interlanguage Notion

The notion of interlanguage is central in the explanation of bilingual-learner language or Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Hamers & Blanc, 1990). Interlanguage is the result of the interaction among the many language acquisition device factors in any two (or three in multilingual situations) languages developing more or less simultaneously. This linguistic behavior is described similarly by many researchers in second-language acquisition and bilinguality studies. The term was first coined by Larry Selinker in 1972, and many others have since expanded the notion. According the Hamers and Blanc (1990), between the choice of one language or the other there exists for the bilingual speaker a whole range of intermediary strategies which include the modification of either code and the relative use of both (see figures 1-8 in appendix ii). Interlanguage may be viewed as an adaptive strategy in which the speaker tries to speak the interlocutor's L1 although he has little proficiency in it. This strategy uses simplification, reduction, overgeneralization, transfer, formulaic language, omissions, substitutions, and restructurings (Selinker, 1972). Ellis (1985) explains interlanguage as the theoretical construct which underlies the attempts of SLA researchers to identify the stages of development through which L2 learners pass on their way to L2 or near L2 proficiency. He says learners do not progress from zero knowledge of a target rule to perfect knowledge of the rule. They progress through a series of interim or developmental stages on their way to target language competence. Interlanguage is described by many as permeable, dynamic, changing, and yet systematic (Corder, 1975; Selinker, 1972). It may undergo relative fossilization and relative change, but it reveals an underlying cognitive process even though its surface structure seems the opposite because it does not match conventional forms of what is linguistically correct. According to Andersen (1984), interlanguage goes from a nativization process to a denativization one. For Andersen there has been too much focus on the acquisition of target language

features rather than on the process of interlanguage construction itself. For him second language acquisition by any other name can and should be characterized in positive terms and principles that govern the construction of meaning-to-form and function-to-form relationships. For Klein (1986) interlanguages or learner-language varieties should be viewed not only as systematic as well as variable but also as creative with rules unique to itself and not just a borrowed form of the other languages. He says that however imperfect from a normative point of view, these means represent the learner's current repertoire and, as such, a learner variety of the target language. He concludes that the process of language acquisition can be construed as a series of transitions from one variety to the next. Pit Corder (1981) defines the structural properties of interlanguage as: (a) a simple morphological system, (b) a more or less fixed word order, (c) a simple personal pronoun system, (d) a small number of grammatical function words, (e) little or no use of the copula, and (f) the absence of an article system. He describes the interlanguage notion as "transitional language" and presents a model which is inaccurate in various respects but is always more or less complete. For Corder it is a working model, a grammar, a system which can be used quite effectively for communicative purposes. It presupposes that the language learner at all points of his learning career "has a language" (see appendixes i and ii). He acknowledges that the notion of interlanguage is difficult for teachers whose attitude toward it is as a deviant, distorted, or debased form of some standard or target language. Grosjean (1985) also points to the incomprehension and misconceptions by many of the interlanguage behavior of developing bilinguals or of the language behavior specific to binguality. He says that when these speakers have used intermediary speech modes that were seen as errors, the speakers themselves were perceived as confused, unbalanced, semilingual, alingual, anomalous, and so on. While the complexity of the interlanguage is not the purpose of this paper to detail, it is introduced as a natural and normal functional process. For the language learner it may only be nonnormative, when others who do not understand its normative place, call it such.

The Code-switching Notion

Another nonnormative or "quaint" linguistic behavior of bilinguals or developing bilinguals is code-switching and its related concepts such as language transferring and language borrowing. As with the interlanguage construct it is not the purpose of this paper to outline in any refined way the complexity of code switching and its related notions. Nor is it the purpose of this paper to outline the relationship which exits between the interlanguage notion and the code-switching notions, although my hope is that someone is doing or will do this for us soon. It is the intent of this paper to try to see them both as interlinguistic phenomena specific to bilinguals. These bilingual phenomena are in much need of explanation and understanding for those who must deal with them in the instructional context or other contexts where this is an important matter. While both interlanguage and code-switching are probably strongly related and may appear more or less concurrently in the language life of the developing bilingual I will use the term code-switching for that point in the developmental time of bilingual learners when they are conscious of such behavior and then choose more or less purposefully to use or not to use it. For our purposes only, if there is a beginning, middle, and culminating phase in becoming bilingual I would associate the interlanguage notion with the earlier stages of developing bilinguals, and code switching (including mixing, transferring, and borrowing) with the middle and later phases of bilingual acquisition. However, while interlanguage is the language constructed before arriving at more ideal

forms of the target language, code switching may occur during and after the interlanguage phase. It may be that with children who are simultaneously developing two (or three) languages from infancy that interlanguage and code-switching may be less distinguishable or less discernible one from the other. In any case, both seem to be a natural cross linguistic outgrowth of becoming or having become bilingual.

Code-switching is the use of two languages simultaneously or interchangeably (Valdes-Fallis, 1977). It implies some degree of competence in the two languages even if bilingual fluency is not yet stable. Code-switching may be used to achieve two things: (a) fill a linguistic/conceptual gap, or (b) for other multiple communicative purposes (Gysels, 1992). While in some places and cases code switching is the exception, in many multilingual and bilingual communities it is and should be seen as the norm (Swigart, 1992; Goyvaerts & Zembele, 1992). It appears that where code-switching is the norm it is perceived as fluid, unmarked, and uneventful, and where it is the exception it will be perceived as marked, purposeful, emphasis-oriented, and strange. How is code-switching explained by those who study it? Gumperz (1982) describes code-switching as discourse exchanges which form a single unitary interactional whole:

Speakers communicate fluently, maintaining an even flow of talk. No hesitation pauses, changes in sentence rhythm, pitch level or intonation contour mark the shift in code. There is nothing in the exchange as a whole to indicate that speakers don't understand each other. Apart from the alternation itself, the passages have all the earmarks of ordinary conversation in a single language. (p. 60)

This bilingual state of affairs is described in terms of the heavily interactive nature of the two languages. Traditionally code-switching was seen and still is seen by many as a random process that could be explained by interference. Today it is considered as rule-governed behavior and as a communication strategy (Corder, 1981).

Grosjean and Soares (1986) studied language processing in the mixed language mode in French/English and Portuguese/English. They state that a bilingual has the choice of activating both, thus code-mixing, or of deactivating one and activating the other in a monolingual context; however, there is never total deactivation of one language when the other is more prominent in the situation. They propose a base or matrix language and then the bringing in of the other language by either code-switching through the word, phrase, clause, or sentence level or through borrowings. The interaction procedure is still unclear in terms of linguistic processing theory. They propose with Obler and Albert (1978) a general language monitoring device that is flexible, rapid, and automatic, and they agree with Paradis (1980) that the bilingual has two language lexicons, each of which is connected to one conceptual store (Paradis does not posit a bilingual monitoring device). If there is such a device it uses all the information it can to indicate as quickly as possible which language is being spoken: prosodic information (fundamental frequency, duration, rate, amplitude, stress pattern, etc.); segmental information (phoneme and syllable characteristic); syntactic and semantic rules; knowledge of the speaker and of the topic; pragmatic factors, as well as the constraints imposed on code-switching and borrowing by the two languages in question. This means, of course, that the device is constantly receiving feedback from the higher level processors. The device is always active, but especially so when the speaker is in a bilingual speech mode and the probability of language mixing is high. Grosjean and Soares (1984) explain that the challenge

for psycholinguists interested in studying mixed language processing will be to explain how communication in mixed language takes place so rapidly and so efficiently despite what they have seen as some rather intricate operations and strategies.

Sankoff and Poplack (1980) refer to an "equivalence constraint" or rule which states that bilinguals in uttering sentences may use constituents of one language at one point and those of another at another point as long as the order of these constituents is shared by the two languages (at least in the study of Spanish/English mix modes).

Woolford (1983) views code-switched sentences as resulting from a mixture of phrase structure rules extracted from the two languages. She argues that phrase structure rules of the two languages can be freely mixed in the construction of the tree structures of code-switched sentences.

Sridhar and Sridhar (1980) assume that there is a basic language bilingual discourse and propose the terminology of guest and host languages to describe code-switched utterances. They argue that intrasentential code-switching is a case where guest elements, which have their own internal structure, occur in the sentences of the host language, obeying the placement rules of the host language or the matrix language (at least as they saw it in the study of Kannada/English mix).

Poplack (1980) discusses two grammatical constraints on code-switching: (a) a free-morpheme constraint which states that a switch cannot occur between a lexical form and a bound morpheme unless the former has been phonologically integrated into the language of the latter and (b) the equivalence constraint rule which states that the word order immediately before and immediately after a switching point should exist in the two languages to make it possible for a switch to take place. The two languages involved can then be interchanged freely.

Chana (1984) describes code-switching as the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems. The items are tied together prosodically as well as by semantic and syntactic relations equivalent to those that join passages in a single language.

Lipski (1982) speaks of a bilingual grammar especially during intrasentential code-switching in written text: Type I is the monolingual text in which there are some Spanish words within English literature or vice-versa; Type II text is the bilingual text in which lines from the two languages alternate with switches at the phrase or sentence boundaries. Type III text is the bilingual text which would include intrasentential code-switches-- the most highly developed. He proposes a bilingual grammar constructed of a finely integrated blend of two languages. He says that code-switching provides evidence on two related planes: linguistic and psychological. The psychological includes the situational variables that permit a switch to occur, and the linguistic includes factors that facilitate the switch and the precise form that a switched utterance takes.

Code-switching seems to serve important communicative and cognitive functions. However in the

majority of communities studied some social stigma has been attached to this mode of speaking by both in/out groups.

Gibbons (1983) studied language attitudes and code-switching in Hong Kong between Cantonese and English. They indicate that when Chinese speakers use English with one another they give an impression of status and westernization. When they use Cantonese they give an impression of Chinese humility and solidarity. However, a mix was considered ill-mannered, show-off, ignorant, not good-looking, aggressive, and proud from the Cantonese point of view.

Stevens (1983) found similar attitudes between French and Arabic in Tunisia with Arabic the favored language.

Chana (1984) studied listeners' evaluative reactions to code-switched speech by a speaker who was also heard as a perfect Punjabi and as a perfect English speaker. When he used the code-switched form he was considered less fluent, less intelligent, and less expressive than when he used only Punjabi or only English.

Ten years later the code-switching research shows that both users and non users of this linguistic form do not admit or allow its acceptability. The findings by language researchers about the linguistic and communicative integrity of this language form seem not to have been widely understood or accepted yet. A special issue on code-switching in The Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development summarizes (a) the wide use of code-switching in different contexts and with different languages-in-contact, (b) the major purpose of code-switching as being both a social/discourse phenomenon as well as a structured linguistic one, (c) a comparison to the related notion of borrowing, (d) a description of code switching patterns not as an aberration but as systematic and logical, and (e) the negative view many users and nonusers of code-switching still hold about it. In this special issue an important statement drawn from Monica Heller (1992) is that "the absence of code-switching can be as significant as the presence of it" (p. 124). If it is something which happens naturally in the scheme of bilinguality it must serve important functions for the language learner/user. This natural language function is in direct conflict with normative or conventional forms and attitudes about what is "good language" and thus, it is not appreciated or supported. People may go to great lengths in some cases from denying it to finding all sorts of reasons and ways to discourage its use and to eradicate it. Perhaps is it time to question the effects of such attitudes and behavior on the whole bilingual language development continuum.

Conclusion

Because code-switching (and interlanguage) do not sound conventional, and because we do not understand the role they play in natural language development and usage, and because we have little control over them, we tend to see them as aberrations. Because we do not understand well the linguistic and communicative rules and purposes which explain them as natural and creative outgrowths of being bilingual we cannot accept them as a pattern unique to bilinguals. Because they are neither fish nor fowl we may see them solely as alingualism, semilingualism, interference, confusion, or fossilization instead

of as new and alternative forms created by cognitive/conceptual synthesis of two languages. Whether code switching is used to fill a gap or if it is a conscious desire to mix the two languages to create new forms, the language created in most code-switches has internal linguistic consistency and validity for the learner's deep structure. While the surface structure also has bilingual consistency and validity to those communicating with it, for language separatists and language purists it is otherwise. First language purists fear that the use of the second language with the first will either keep the first one from growing or debase it or cause confusion in the speaker's mind. Second language purists think the same. It may just be that both interlanguage and code-switching are needed for many reasons, one of which may be in order not to debase, erase, or cause cognitive confusion to each language. Wouldn't that surprise us all?

In stable bilingual/multilingual contexts confusion does not seem to be the case. In fact, for bilinguals, it seems to be a case of a three-pronged language growth. It is important that people charged with the language growth of bilinguals lend support to all three forms in order that they lend support to the development of the two separate languages. I have not come across any studies which outline the development of bilinguality without the use of interlanguage, code-switching, and other cross-linguistic phenomena. We do not know empirically for sure whether and where and how the use of these cross-linguistic creations helps or hinders the separate development of all the languages in question. We do know that bilinguals eventually do learn to separate their languages but that sometimes they choose not to. As with the larger bilingual education vs. monolingual education story, the story of cross-linguistic influence may show a history first of negative effects, next of neutral effects, and later still of some positive effects.

It could be that even if code-switching and interlanguage are not intentional goals we might aim for directly, at the very least it may be that we come to understand the concepts in more positive linguistic, cognitive, communicative, and developmental terms. Both seem to be highly incriminated in the growth process when more than one language is developing. We have not yet studied the effects that stifling or allowing code-switching and interlanguage may have on the total linguistic, conceptual, and social development of the bilingual individual. We have not studied the effects of such on bicultural development and ultimately on cultural restoration and maintenance or on cultural shift and assimilation. My assumption is that perhaps where there is a more or less balanced code-switching (that is where as much of one language is intertwined in the utterance of the other) in appropriate, natural, and needed code-switching domains that it may be one of the strongest signs on the part of code-switchers to simultaneously give equal time, equal value, and equal space to both languages in both the cognitive and cultural sense. This should not detract from total time, total value, and total space given to each language in other linguistic events where code-switching is not needed, intended, or appropriate. For bilinguals and others with multiple languages there will always be many combinations of language use.

Viewing and constructing the world from one cultural point of view may appear to be more normative and refined and therefore more conventionally accepted. The same constructs can be viewed, however, from two or more world views in a rich bilingual/multicultural environment. In this case one language might help the other, and sometimes both together may create a new idea, image, thought, behavior, outlook, organization, and adaptation, and thus move culture to new adaptive places in the dynamics of cross-cultural life.

Finally code-switching and interlanguage seem to have a function of facilitating and supporting thinking and communication, no matter how the outward information may appear. It remains for us to see how we might approach such facilitation in the bilingual classroom.

Humans are capable of constructing many changes, and once having constructed them to use them or abandon them, and so it is with the nonnormative forms of language called interlanguage and code-switching. Someday they may come to be seen as normative and as significant in the life of bilinguals.

Appendix I includes a visual symbol created by Corder (1981) to portray the Interlanguage notion with three overlapping circles.

Appendix II is a visual symbol adapted from Corder where I use only two overlapping circles to explain from figure l to figure 8 a summary story of the interlanguage notion.

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APPENDIX I

Pit Corder's Visual Model of Interlanguage Notion.

*Interlanguage Symbol
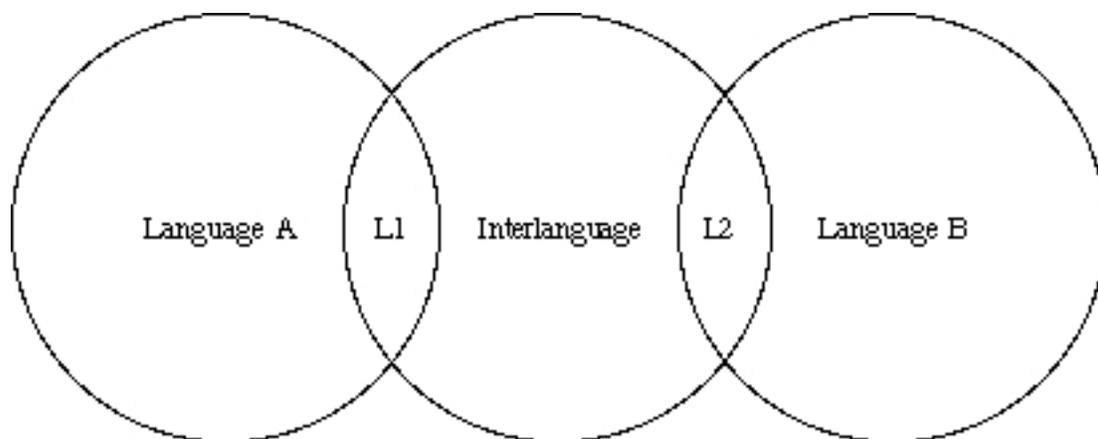
*From: Corder, *Error Analysis and Interlanguage*, 1981.

# APPENDIX II

Duran Adaptation of Corder's Interlanguage Notion

Figure 1
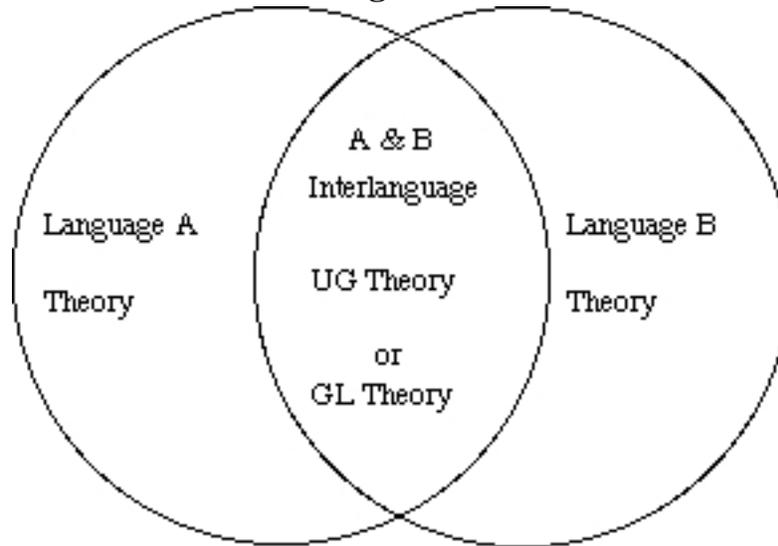
Figure 1. Whatever theory (Universal Grammar types or General Learning types) explains language best is not the issue here. The point here is that whatever theory is operating, this theory will explain the growth of all three: Language A, Interlanguage, and Language B.
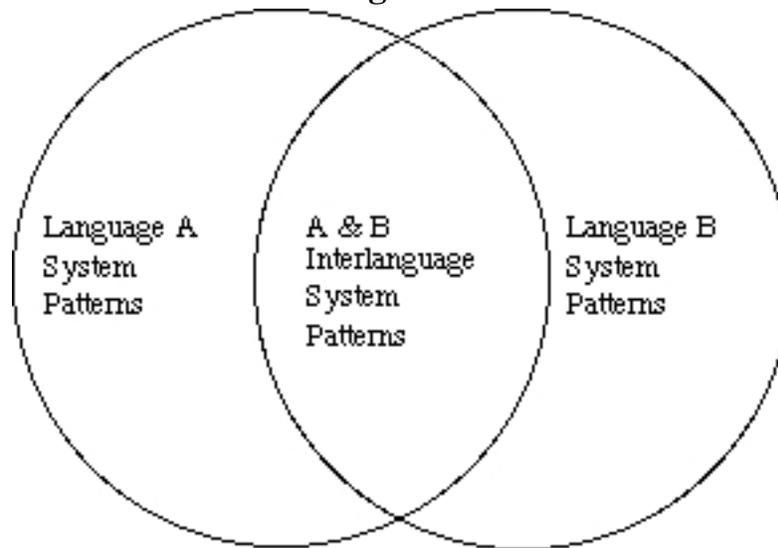
Figure 2
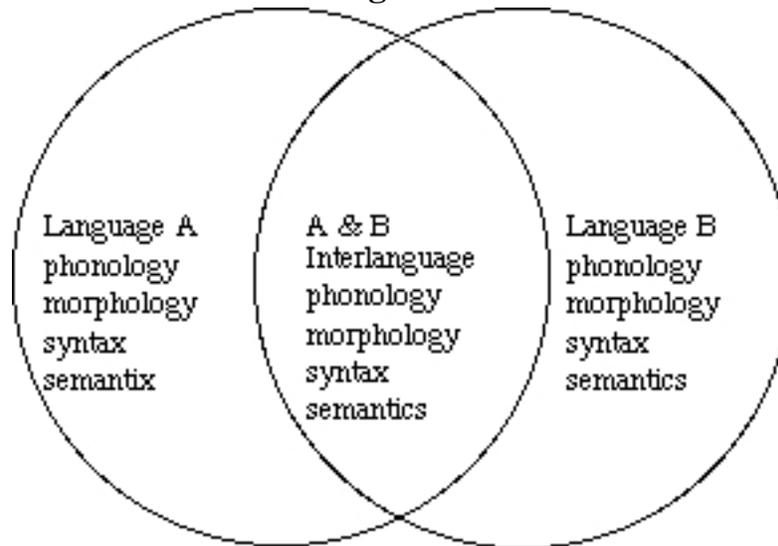
Figure 2. The relationship which will be created between the two languages will involve the influence of all the subsystems of one language on the other to different degrees so that there might be a "new" phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics created which differs to different degrees from Language A and Language B.
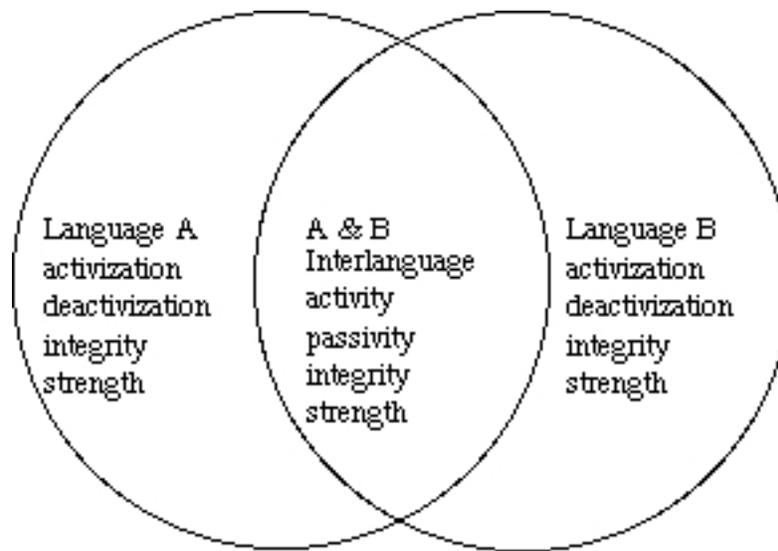
Figure 3
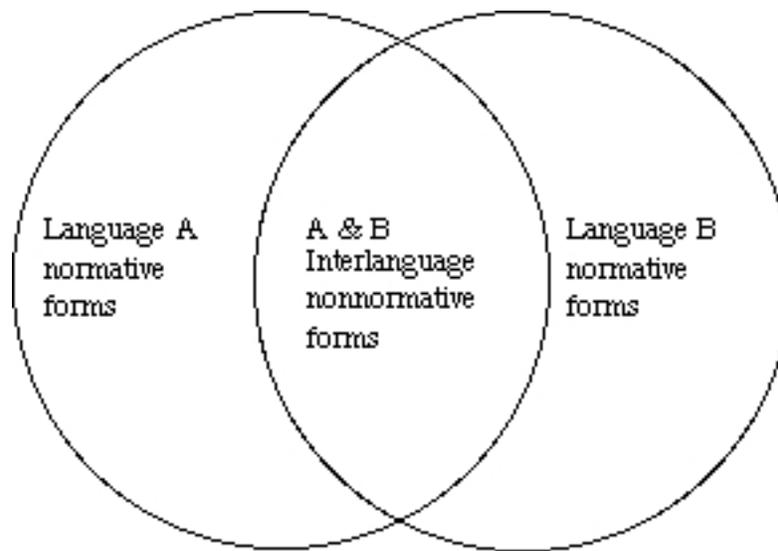
Figure 3. Because the relationship of A & B creates new forms of language which are not normative or conventional forms of either language the interlanguage form will be perceived as nonnormative and "strange." Negative labels such as fossilization, interference, semilingualism, debased, confused, unbalanced, anomalous, pseudolingual, incorrect, etc. will be attached to the new forms.
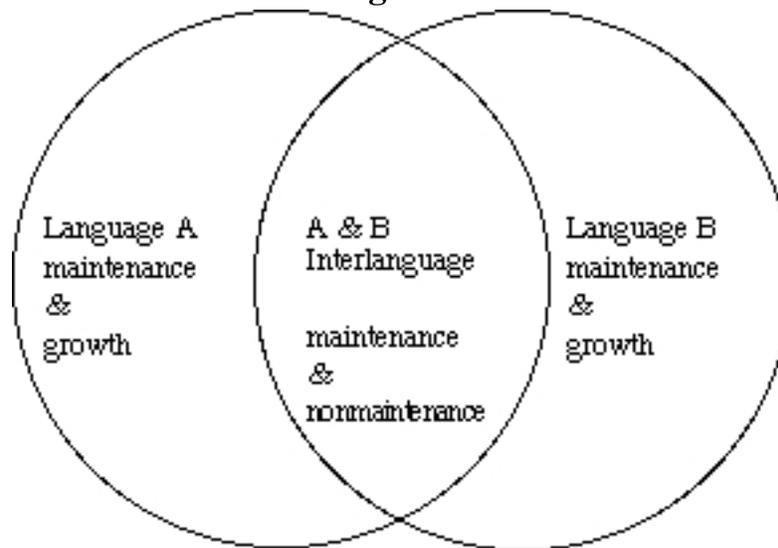
Figure 4

Figure 4. While monolingualism is characterized by its specific language system patterns, A & B Interlanguage system patterns may or may not include system patterns of the two languages. Interlanguage will include the following systematic patterns: transfer, borrowings, overgeneralization, omission, additions, orderings, formulas, substitutions, etc., in a two-way or back and forth flow.
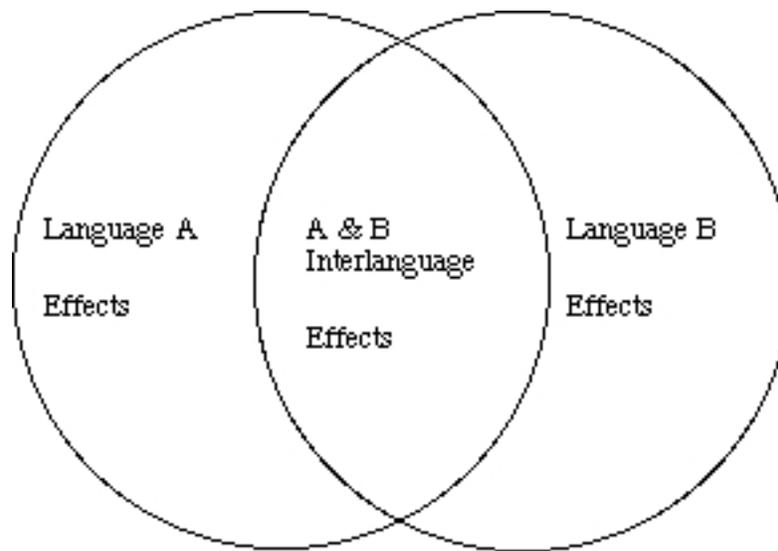
Figure 5

Figure 5. The activity, integrity, and strength of each language should be aided by the major purpose, strength, activity, and integrity of interlanguage as: an interim language; as a transitional language; as a stage in the development of bilingualism; as a move from nativization to denativization; as a theoretical mental construct; and as an adaptive strategy in the language equilibation process.
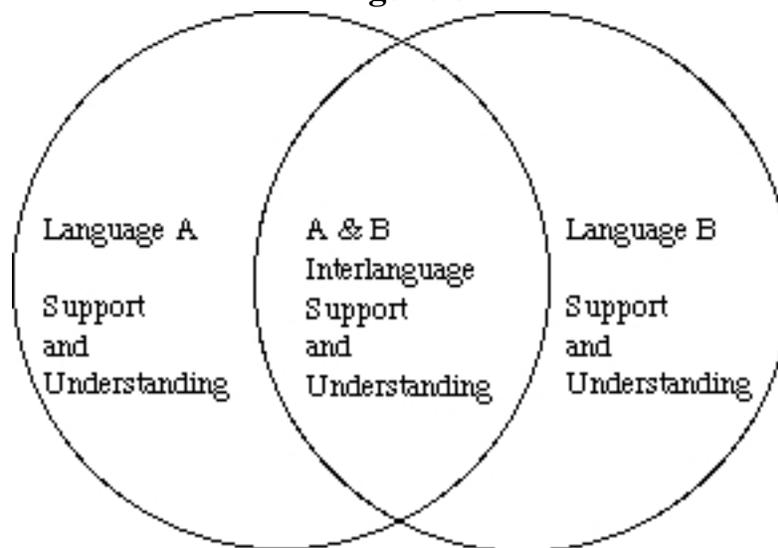
Figure 6

Figure 6. While it may not seem so, it is my assumption that the major purpose of interlanguage is both as an interim adaptive strategy of the language learner as well as an aid in the maintenance and development of each language to its optimum forms. In this sense some aspects of interlanguage may still remain and others will have disappeared. Interlanguage would have acted on its own behalf as a more or less systematic, dynamic, variable, changing, and complete but permeable process as well as on behalf of the same thing for the separate language.

Figure 7

Figure 7. The effects of interlanguage will more/less be three major ones: (a) that Language A and Language B have their unique results unto themselves; (b) that each language will always in some way be tied to the other; and (c) that a third way of using language cognitively and communicatively will be unique and specific to the developed bilingual: metalinguistic ability, cognitive flexibility, conceptual elaboration, divergent thinking, bilateralism, (right/left brain hemispheric function) cognitive pluralism, codeswitching, code-mixing, and other forms of language patterns not common to monolingualism.

Figure 8

Figure 8. While monolingual speakers of Language A and Language B have no problem supporting or scaffolding the growth of their language, developing bilinguals often do not receive the support (or find such support in themselves) necessary for becoming bilingual. The heart of this type of support may be at the interlanguage stage and then later in the choice of the mixed form as well as the choice of the use of separate languages. Knowledgeable bilingual instructors may soon lend support and appreciation for this unique language process.

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