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Quesada Pacheco, Allen
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ISSUES ON RAISING A BILINGUAL CHILD IN COSTA RICA: A MYTH OR A REALITY?

ESTADO DE LA CUESTIÓN: CRIANZA DE UN NIÑO O UNA NIÑA BILINGÜE EN COSTA RICA-UNA REALIDAD O UN MITO

Allen Quesada Pacheco[1]

"Daddy! I love you hasta el cielo and hasta el piso a lot-ito".
(Itzel Quesada Aguilar, 2010)

Abstract: *This article deals with main issues concerning bilingualism and bilingual first language acquisition (BFLA). A review of the literature is presented on how children learn languages. In addition, this paper summarizes what bilingualism is and addresses how the One-parent One-language (OPOL) and the Minority Language at Home (ML@H) methods work. The paper includes sample testimonies of Itzel, a three-year-old child, raised with these methods. It also illustrates samples of her code-switching and code-mixing as part of her evolution in bilingual first language acquisition. Based on this evolution, there is some evidence that a child can become bilingual under foreign language conditions. Finally, the article reflects on the decisive role that dedication, consistency and effort have as crucial components to accomplish BFLA.*

Keywords: *BILINGUALISM, BFLA, ML@H, OPOL, FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, CODE MIXING, CODE-SWITCHING*

Resumen: *Este artículo enmarca el tema concerniente al bilingüismo en general y como primera lengua. Se presenta un marco teórico acerca de cómo los niños aprenden un primer idioma. Este artículo resume la literatura relacionada con el bilingüismo y se hace una explicación acerca de dos procesos que lo fundamentan: Un Padre-Un Idioma y el Idioma Minoritario en Casa. El documento incluye ejemplos testimoniales acerca de una niña de tres años, llamada Itzel, que fue criada bajo la influencia de los procesos mencionados e incluye ejemplos del lenguaje de la niña tales como el cambio de códigos (code-switching) y/o la mezcla de códigos (code-mixing) como parte de su evolución en el bilingüismo como primer idioma. Esto evidencia que un niño o una niña puede ser bilingüe en un contexto donde no se habla otra lengua o en un contexto extranjero. Finalmente, se realiza una reflexión acerca del rol decisivo que desempeñan la dedicación, la consistencia y el esfuerzo, como componentes cruciales para el logro del bilingüismo como primera lengua.*

Palabras clave: *BILINGUALISMO, BILINGUALISMO COMO PRIMERA LENGUA (BFLA), IDIOMA MINORITARIO EN CASA (ML@H), UN PADRE UN IDIOMA (OPOL), ADQUISICIÓN DE UNA PRIMERA LENGUA, ADQUISICIÓN DE UNA LENGUA EXTRANJERA, CAMBIO DE CÓDIGOS, MEZCLA DE CÓDIGOS*

[1] *Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction (Enseñanza del Inglés), University of Kansas (KU), E.E.U.U. Master of Arts in TESOL, New York University. Master of Science in Educational Technology, University of Kansas. Catedrático, docente e investigador. Coordinador Académico del Bachillerato en Inglés de la Escuela de Lenguas Modernas, Facultad de Letras de la Universidad de Costa Rica.*

Dirección electrónica: allen.quesada@ucr.ac.cr

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1. Introduction

One can be sure that the best time to teach your child a second language is the same time he or she is learning his / her first one. Babies develop language skills rapidly, and they absorb whatever they hear very quickly. The earlier parents introduce a second language, the easier it will be for children to pick up its unique sounds. Studies have shown that kids´ brain is very receptive to learning several languages at the same time (Cenoze, J., 2009; Collier, V.P., 1992; Bhatia, T. K. & Ritchie, W. C., 2006; Hakuta, K., 1986; Diaz, R. M., 1983). The more a child is opened up to several languages, the more powerful and strengthened his or her brain becomes. Accordingly, based on this premise, instead of promoting second language acquisition (SLA), the trend should be directed to fostering bilingual first language acquisition (BFLA). According to Zurer (2008), BFLA is "*the process by which a baby or young child learns two languages simultaneously, so neither can be called first "language or the "second" language*" (p. 309).

In a country like Costa Rica where Spanish is the population's native language, exposing a baby to a second language like English is more demanding. That is why the terms English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) gain importance. To clarify, ESL is when English is learned in English-speaking settings, like the United States or Canada, and EFL is when English is learned in a foreign-language setting like Costa Rica. Under these circumstances, we can state that a child can become bilingual under both FL and SL environments, which is the main issue in this article, that is, Bilingual First Language Acquisition in Costa Rica.

This paper highlights significant insights on two central approaches for Bilingual First Language Acquisition (BFLA): Minority Language at Home (ML@H) and One Parent One Language (OPOL). A brief examination is given to first language acquisition and bilingualism. It also concentrates on code-switching and code-mixing as developmental processes towards bilingualism.

2. Language Acquisition Parent Strategies

2.1 Minority Language at Home

Clearly, in Costa Rica, the majority language is Spanish. In order to accomplish BFLA, a full or partial application or use of the Minority Language at Home (ML@H) becomes compulsory. In the full application, both parents speak the minority language to each other and

to the child in the nuclear family. On the other hand, in the partial application both parents speak the majority language to each other and only one parent uses the minority language with the child. The reason behind the aforementioned strategy is that the parent using the minority language at home (ML@H) is the one who speaks English because it is either his or her native language or because he or she is fluent in this language. Consistency and dedication are probably the most important components to succeeding in BFLA (Genesee, 2008).

Definitely, Bilingual First Language Acquisition is not an easy process. That is why at least one parent should take advantage of all of the opportunities that could engage his or her baby to hearing the new language. It is especially important for the parent to talk to the child as natural as possible and in great and consistent amounts. One possibility to doing this is by connecting the child to the minority language at home with the help of technological tools such as DVDs, software, songs, games and a series of many other supplementary resources (books). The quantity and frequency of words a child is exposed to has a direct influence on how fast that child will learn a language both on a receptive and expressive level (Schmitt, 2000; Nation, 2001). For this reason, dedication goes hand-in-hand with consistency. This consistency should start from birth and should never stop throughout the first years of the child's language development. How much a parent speaks to a child would make a big difference in how much the child would speak to the parent or to other people the child socializes with in the minority language. In bilingual first language acquisition, indeed, two languages are being exposed to the child. Research has demonstrated that a parallel, but separate lexical development of two languages can occur in both morphology and syntax under certain conditions: if it starts from birth and if the amount of exposure to both languages is as natural and authentic as in first language acquisition settings (Volterra & Traute, 1978; Genessee, 2008; Libardo 2006; Quay, 1995).

2.2 One parent One Language

There is a method called One Parent One language (OPOL) which allows BFLA. Through OPOL, both parents talk naturally to their baby in the language which they feel more comfortable with (one parents speaks in Spanish which is the native language / the other parent speaks in the second language, English). As a result, the child would use both languages simultaneously. Although there are many parents reluctant in the application of the OPOL method because of the

fear of language delay or language confusion, there is no research evidence to support this (Zuror, 2008). On the contrary, the use of two languages in the same conversation has been found to be a sign of the child's mastery of both languages. Research has also indicated that the child's ability to switch back and forth between the two languages, sometimes called code-switching, is not a sign of language confusion; rather, it marks a complete control of the two linguistic systems involved (Zuror, 2008). Consequently, children at the age of two or three would code-switch or code-mix in socially appropriate ways.

3. How Children learn languages

Well-known scholars have contributed to the understanding of how children learn languages. Purposeful considerations will be given to those theories that are related to this paper. According to Piaget (2003), children are active learners. They learn through first hand experiences and through prior knowledge which they imitate and convert into their own behavioral styles. Piaget emphasized that there is a cognitive and intellectual development and growth in language as children undergo several stages naturally. The first stage is the sensorimotor stage that occurs from birth to two years. The child uses his innate skills and abilities to internalize everything that surrounds him or her by looking, grasping and listening.

The sensorimotor stage includes the reflexes stage (0-1 month) that helps the child understand the world by looking and listening. After this stage, the child moves to the primary circular reactions stage where he or she connects sensations and repeats actions intentionally to communicate pleasure or understanding (memory). When the child is four to eight months old, he or she is more conscious of his or her actions and produces them in order to get response from the environment (memory / mobility). From eight to twelve months old, the coordination of the reactions stage begins and the child shows a more logically manifestation of his or her actions by exploring and communicating language (Piaget, 2003).

For Piaget (2003), the sensorimotor stage is the infancy stage. He explained that by nine months, infants can understand the meaning of "no", for example, and they also begin to test parents' responses to their behavior. By 12 months of age, babies can say certain words and follow directions that involve two different tasks at the same time. In other words, at the end of this stage, infants produce language and can communicate verbally and non-verbally. As the infants move to the toddlerhood stage (pre-operational stage,18 months – 3 years old), their

cognitive development is greater and their language growth is so strong that they can add up to approximately 10 words per day to their vocabulary. Since the concern of this paper is mainly on the first two stages explained by Piaget, the last two stages of cognitive development (concrete operational stage and formal operational stage) will not be explained (Wells, 2006).

Vygotsky (cited in Woolfolk, 2004), on the other hand, agreed with Piaget viewing the child or infant as an active learner. However, his theory addresses that language evolves through social interaction. He believed that the culture that surrounded the infant influences the language learned. Contrary to Piaget´s theories, the Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Development explains that social learning precedes language development. In other words, the social connection of the child with the world or culture that surrounds him or her forms the language first; then, that language is internalized. Through what Vygotsky called "dialogues," children socially interact and communicate with others to learn the cultural values of our society. Therefore, culture helps shape cognition. In short, Vygotsky described learning as being embedded within social events and occurring as a child interacts with people, objects, and events in the environment (Woolfolk, 2004).

In addition, John Dewey, a well-known constructivist, focuses learning a language on the individual by giving great significance to the construction of meaning. Dewey (1916) explained that the child or the individual is not just a receptor of knowledge. The child needs to connect that knowledge to the world that surrounds him or her. Learning a language involves experimenting that language through sensory input and constructing meaning out of it "*by doing*". The construction of meaning according to Dewey is mental and physical. It is mental because it happens in the mind, but physical actions and hands-on experience are necessary to create a bond between mind and body, specifically the child's hands. Dewey's theory on reflective activity emphasized that the activities children do as they grow in the language should engage both the mind as well as the hands to make learning meaningful through a process of personal reflection or personal understanding of what happened in the activity. He illustrates his theory through this example:

> The sound h-a-t would remain as meaningless…if it were not uttered in connection with an action which is participated in by a number of people….the sound h-a-t gains meaning in precisely the same way that the thing "hat" gains it, by being used in a given way. And they acquire the same meaning with the child which they have with the adult because they are used in a common experience by both….Understanding one another means that

> objects, including sounds, have the same value for both with respect to carrying on a common pursuit….We conclude…that the use of language to convey and acquire ideas is an extension and refinement of the principle that things gain meaning by being used in a shared experience or joint action. (Dewey, 1916, pp. 15-16)

Dewey (1958) agreed with Vygotsky in the importance of social interaction in the process of learning a language. For Dewey, learning a language is a social activity. It is intimately connected to our families, our relatives, our peers, with other human beings and surroundings. Dewey's contribution to constructivism recognizes the social aspect of learning and uses conversation, interaction with others, and the application of knowledge as an integral part of learning.

> If…language…is recognized as the instrument of social cooperation and mutual participation, continuity is established between natural events (animal sound, cries, etc.) and the origin and development of meanings. Mind is seen to be a function of social interactions, and to be a genuine character of natural events when these attain the stage of widest and most complex interaction with one another. (Dewey, 1958, p. xii-xiii)

Indeed, cognitive development plays a key role in learning and thinking methods of children. Piaget, Vygotsky and Dewey offer some incredible insight into the ways children learn, and by using these theories, it is possible to create a more conducive learning environment for each child.

For other scholars, cognitive development is viewed more concretely in three stages: learning sounds, learning words, learning sentences. Brainbridge (2009) has summarized the stages of language learning in babies and toddlers as follows: The first stage is the learning of sounds. Babies can hear all the sounds in all the languages in the world. These sounds are called phonemes and the English language, for example, has about 44. Babies start the stage of phonemic awareness and if they are learning two languages simultaneously (English and Spanish), they can distinguish which belong to one language or the other. In the stage, the learning of words, children learn how the sounds in a language go together to make meaning. To say mommy, for example, they connect the sounds *m, ah, m, and ee*. Children identify the beginning and ending of the word producing "word boundaries". The words they produce at this stage are morphemes. In the third stage, the production of sentences, children connect the words or morphemes and put them in the correct order through trial and error, through

experimentation. For instance, they can produce sentences such as "I want a banana" or "want banana" or "want I a banana", and so forth.

In short, Bainbridge (2009) has explained that language development follows a pattern:

Babies: response to rhythm (stress, pace, pitch)

Six Months: identification of language sounds and other noise (spoken or a clap)

Eight Months: recognition of group of sounds

Twelve Months: attachment of meaning to words (building of vocabulary)

Eighteen Months: recognition of nouns, pronouns, verbs, understanding of basic sentence structure, and creation of simple sentences. Example: "Me banana?"

Thirty to Thirty-Six Months: creation of 90 % of grammatically correct sentences with mistakes. Example: the use of the *–ed* ending

All of these stages are directly related to the theories of learning explained by Piaget, Vygotsky and Dewey that deal with learning by doing, experimentation and social interaction.

4. Bilingualism and BFLA

People use the term "bilingualism" in different ways. For some, it means an equal ability to communicate in two languages. For others, it simply means the ability to communicate in two languages, but being more dominant in one of the two languages. In regards to acquisition, Zurer (2008) has distinguished bilingual first language acquisition (BFLA) from second language acquisition (SLA). If a child learns two "first" languages simultaneously, this process is referred to bilingual first language acquisition.

The process of acquiring a first language as presented by Dewey, Vygotsky, and Piaget serves as groundwork to the process of acquiring two or more languages. Zurer (2008) has claimed that "*if children learn two languages simultaneously, as in Bilingual First Language Acquisition, they will have two "first" languages. However, children who learn their languages sequentially have one first language (F1) and one second language (F2) , referred as First Language Acquisition (FLA) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA)*" (p. 81). Sequential bilingualism occurs when a person becomes bilingual by, first, learning one language, and then, another. Generally this occurs when the child is three years old before being introduced to a second language. During sequential bilingualism, the child relies on the knowledge and

experience of the first language to rapidly acquire a second language. This process could be easy or difficult; it would depend on the similarities of sound, words and vocabulary. For this reason, a child who experiences early and simultaneous natural exposure to the two languages his or her parents use, are more likely to approach bilingual language development more smoothly. (Alic, n.d.).

5. Bilingual First Language Acquisition (BFLA).

Bilingual First Language Acquisition has a theoretical foundation on two important hypothesis: the Unitary Language System Hypothesis (Volterra & Traute, 1978) and the more recent theory, the Dual Language System Hypothesis (Genesse, 2004, as cited in Libardo, 2006). Libardo (2006) has explained that the Unitary Language System Hypothesis divides early development into three stages:

- Stage One - L1 and L2 comprise one language system until approximately 3 years of age.
- Stage Two - L1 vocabulary separates from L2, but the grammar remains as one language
- Stage Three - The language systems become differentiated. The child is fully bilingual

Volterra and Taeschner (1978) gave a more explicit formulation of this hypothesis by stating:

> In the first stage the child has one lexical system which includes words from both languages. …, in this stage the language development of the bilingual child seems to be like the language development of the monolingual child. … In the second stage, the child distinguishes two different lexicons, but applies the same syntactic rules to both languages. In the third stage the child speaks two languages differentiated both in lexicon and syntax… (p. 312)

Dual language learning or development is also referred to BFLA. It can occur simultaneously or successively. When parents regularly use two languages with their child from birth is known as simultaneous dual language learning (DLL); or, it can occur successively, for example when children are exposed to and speak only one language at home during the first one or two years of life and then attend daycare or preschool programs in which another language is used.

The concern of this paper is simultaneous dual language learning (DLL). The strong version of this hypothesis is the unitary language system hypothesis mentioned above. As Genesse (2008) has stated,

> Specifically, it has been hypothesized that infants with dual language exposure go through an initial stage when their languages are not differentiated, but constitute a single underlying language system. Arguably this occurs because learners treat input from the two languages as if it were part of a single language. (p. 3)

Libardo (2006) and Quay (1995) have explained that the Dual Language System Hypothesis holds that simultaneous learners separate the first language (L1) from the second language (L2) since the beginning. In contrast to monolingual children who develop vocabulary with one-to-one correspondence (one term for each concept) in the early stages, bilingual children develop one-to-one correspondence too, but in each language. The evidence of the separation of L1 and L2 strives in the use of "off words" or "translation equivalents" that have the same meanings in both languages. For example, a bilingual child learns that both "water" and "agua" represent the same "one" concept. Evidence of separate grammatical systems, some from the beginning of first word combinations also lend support for the Dual Language System Hypothesis (Paradis et al, 2000) as well as the phonological systems (Paradis, 2001). However, the later stages of development are quite similar for both dual language learners and monolingual learners as suggested by research.

Zurer (2008) has illustrated these hypotheses by picturing two first languages in the human brain as two trees in a forest.

> If each tree (or language) has its roots in the ground and grows up from the ground up independently, we can say they are both "doing" first language acquisition. Two first languages are generally planted at the same time, at birth, and depending on the nutrients each receives, we may expect parallel growth. (p. 81)

Zurer (2008) has also claimed that for each tree or language to develop as first language, both must be planted simultaneously, around the same time of the child's birth. As the child grows with the two languages or as both trees grow, they can have independent branches and roots or they can have some intermingling of branches and roots, analogous, similar to an individual mixing elements (languages) of what are essentially separate languages (code-mixing / code-switching).

6. One-Parent One language (OPOL) and Bilingualism

A growing number of parents seek having bilingual children in a globalized world. However, many parents believe that engaging a child in the acquisition of two languages simultaneously results in language delay and confusion. Research has proved that "*there is no scientific evidence to date that hearing two or more languages lead to delays or disorders in language acquisition. Many children throughout the world grow up with two or more languages from infancy without showing any signs of language delays or disorder*". (De Houwer, 1999, p. 1) Accordingly, Petitto and Holowka's (2002) have argued that "*very early simultaneous language exposure does* not *cause a young child to be delayed with respect to the semantic and conceptual underpinnings at the heart of all natural language, and this is true regarding* each *of the young bilingual's two native languages*" (p. 23).

In regards to the dilemma about confusion when the child is given input in two languages, research carried out in this field (Eisenberg, Murkoff, & Hathaway, 1989; Honig, n.d.) have explained that confusion could be avoided by using the one-parent, one-language approach (OPOL) where each parent uses only one language with the child, thus avoiding from using two languages in the same conversation. In other words, if there is a family where one parent is more fluent than the other in the English language, for example, this parent will communicate with the child in that language; whereas, the other parent will use the other language, for example, Spanish at other times, but not both languages at the same time.

Williams (2009) has clarified that with OPOL "*each parent speaks only the language that is native to that parent when communicating with the child. Children quickly learn to associate a particular language with the appropriate parent*" (para. 13). One of the advantages to the OPOL method is "*that children grow up able to communicate with the extended family of the parent who speaks the minority (non-community-based) language as easily as with the family and community of the majority language speaker*" (para. 4). A disadvantage to the OPOL method is the mixing of the languages being exposed to (example: English and Spanish) or the invention of words when the child is communicating. Williams (2009) has also explained that this is natural and the success to raise a bilingual child will depend on patience, commitment, consistency and determination. What is interesting about the OPOL method is that the child will associate a specific parent with a specific language.

Barron-Hauwaert (2004) has made clear that

> children need to form a strong parent-language link and have the security of knowing who speaks what. Therefore consistent language use is important in the first three years…Consistent language use means a child can hear a good quantity of each language and he or she can bond with a parent through language. (p. 27)

Studies in the success of the OPOL method (Bain & Yu, 1980) proved that if the minority-language-speaking-parent spent at least one hour a day and extra time on weekends by dialoguing and engaging in play-talk activities, the achievements towards bilingualism would be outstanding. The key factor should be effort and consistency (cited in Barron-Hauwaert, 2004).

Based on the assumption that newborns have an innate capacity to generate languages (without structured teaching) because they bring a Language Acquisition Device (LAD), theory by Noam Chomsky, then the OPOL strategy seems to be a significant option to raise a bilingual child. There are two ways in which parents bond to their child: motherese and fatherese. In the OPOL system, both parents should find ways to produce a language link between the child and themselves to produce that language bond that would help the child differentiate who says what in regards to quality time by talking, singing, and communicating with the baby since birth. Studies have shown that 40 – 60 % of language exposure in both languages seemed to foster a balanced bilingual development (Pearson, Fernandez, Lewedeg, Oller, 1997, cited in Hamers and Blanc, 2000).

7. Stages of Bilingual Child Development

As in first language acquisition, the stages of development of a bilingual child can be summarized as follows based on observations of case studies (Barron-Hauwaert, 2004):

a. As a newborn baby, the child is aware of the two languages since womb and motherese and fatherese bond is used as a survival technique for food and care.
b. From three to six months, the baby distinguishes mother's voice and father's voice, and a linguistic rapport starts by having preference for the mother's voice but reacting positively to both parents when talked to and sung to, responding with babbles, gurgles and smiles.
c. When the child reaches his / her first year, language sensitivity reduces and a wider range of the world opens. First words appear and objects and concepts are labeled and can be talked about. The child indeed understands both languages.

d. Around age two or earlier for some children, the baby notices that communication can be held in both languages. He or she becomes aware that one parent (or some people, depending on the situation) communicates in one language and the other, in another language. The child realizes that some concepts or objects can be named two ways and mean the same. Mixing and substitution of words begin to get across in the two languages.
e. Between 2 or 3 years old, the child becomes aware of the two different languages and would talk accordingly, depending on who knows the language (the right language for the right person). Mixing and substitution still occurs.
f. At around the age of four, the child gains more social awareness and talks the right language to the right speaker. He or she begins to follow the appropriate social norms in formal and informal settings. Mixed language use fades out with monolingual speakers because the child becomes aware that it is not appropriate or unacceptable
g. As school starts, the child begins to grasp the use of the language or languages in a wider society outside of his or her family and friends.
h. Finally, at about six to seven years old, the child reaches a stage where he or she is capable of switching languages according to speaker, topic, setting, language hierarchy and social norms.

One of the most controversial stages is the stage of language differentiation between 2 or 3 years old. Case studies (Meisel, 2000; Gennesee, 1989; De Houwer, 1990; Paradis, 2001; Nicoladis, 1998) have reported a growing awareness of language differentiation at this age, depending on the child and its use of the language. Several of these case studies have confirmed that children do have knowledge of two different languages from birth and the process of mixing is just part of the developmental stage.

8. Code Mixing and Code Switching in Bilingual Children

In the developmental stages towards bilingualism, bilingual children experience code switching or code mixing. Code Switching happens when a person that speaks two languages mixes them, or borrows words from one language, to be clearer and more effective in his/her communication. Code Switching is always consciously chosen, and does not break any rule in either language and normally happens when one speaks both languages well enough**.** Code

Mixing instead happens to both adults and children as they learn a language and borrow words and grammar from their mother tongue to compensate for their inability to express themselves in the second language. Code Mixing happens when one does not speak one or both languages properly. Code mixing is very typical among bilingual children (Trudghill, 2000).

8.1 Code Switching

Crystal (1987, cited in Skiba, 1997) has clarified that there are reasons for code switching to occur: (1) when an individual may not be able to express him/herself in one language and so switches to the other to compensate for the deficiency (a lexical need). This usually happens when the individual is upset, tired or distracted and may use the language he / she made the switch to for a while; (2) when an individual wishes to express solidarity with a particular social group. This usually happens to express rapport between the speaker and the listener or to exclude others from a conversation where the second language is used; (3) when the speaker wishes to convey his/her attitude to the listener since both are accustomed to speaking in that particular language and switching to the other would cause a special effect. In fact, code switching is not considered language interference, but a means of communicating solidarity or affiliation to a particular social group or conveying attitude among bilingual speakers. Children learning a language through the OPOL Method experience this phenomenon. Examples: *Daddy, tienes un orange? / Yo estoy sleeping. / Tu no help me. / We can see Sid the Science Kid si you want. / Mira, no pushes., /donde esta ese paño blue? / Because I want pan. / He don't quiere ir.*

Based on these examples, Liu (2006) has illustrated that there are several types of code-switching: intersentential, intrasentential, or tag-switching. Intersentential code-switching happens at sentence boundaries. The sentence starts in English, for example, and ends in Spanish. Example: "*Daddy, let's go to comprar helado*". Intrasentential code-switching involves a switch in the middle of the sentence, with no interruptions, hesitations or pauses that could indicate a shift. It is done unconsciously. Example: "*I was running al cuarto when I fell".* The third type, tag-switching, occurs when the bilingual person inserts a tag in one language into an utterance that is in another language. Example: the tag "you know": "*Yo quiero jugar, you know*". The following examples refer to the informant, a three-year-old girl named Itzel. In her case, her majority language is Spanish and her minority language is English:

Table 1
Examples of the informant's speech according to the type of code-switching distributed by date (year 2010)

Types of Code switching:	**Intersentential**	**Intrasentential**	**Tag-switching**
	Itzel17_2: Ahorita voy a swim.	Itzel15_6: Daddy! I love you hasta el cielo and hasta el piso a lot-ito	Itzel20_6: Quiero ir allá but mi mami no quiere.
	Itzel19_7: Daddy! You are the bueno…. You are more the best!	Itzel02_7: I have a gran idea!	Itzel 15-9: Look! Allí está el pájaro ("look" can be a tag.)
	Itzel16_8: Quite if off meaning "take" it off	Itzel15_7: Let's go al mall	Itzel 26_9: Quieres comer pizza but no me gusta mucho. ("but" can be a tag)
	Itzel9_11: Look daddy! How I soplo esto.	Itzel20_7: I´m going to arreglar my socks to run!	Itzel9_8: Look! I´m patinando. ("look" is a tag when used frequently)
	Itzel29_9: I like you porque eres mi mejor papa		

Grosjean (2002) has explained that bilinguals con either perform two actions in a bilingual mode: bring the other language as a "guest" o "embedded" language known as code-switch, or borrow a word or short expression from the other language (whether English or Spanish, in this case), and adapt it morphologically into the base language. Contrary to code switching, borrowing integrates one language into the other (Leyla, 2001). Thus, bilingual children can produce a loanword (borrow the form or content of the word) or a loan shift (take part of the word in the base language and extend its meaning to correspond to the same word in the other language, example: "planching" for "planchando"). Another type of loan shift can be the arrangement of words in the base language to follow the pattern of the other language and create a new meaning. Examples of borrowing from the informant named Itzel illustrate this type of action:

Table 2.
Examples of the informant's speech related to borrowing by date (year 2010)

Samples of the **informant's borrowing: Itzel's Speech**
Itzel_17_2: I am planching the blouse. She meant: "I am ironing the blouse";
Itzel_ 6_2: Dad! Arm me please!!! She meant: "Dad, lift me, please" "hold me in your arms";
Itzel _9_2ª: Los pancakes ya estan flipeados. She meant: The pancakes are already flipped.
Itzel_23_3: She is laving the dishes. She meant: "She is washing the dishes";
Itzel_28_3: I need to limp my hands. She meant: "I need to clean my hands".
Itzel+8_4: Yes daddy! I speako Spanish and I speako English. She meant: Yo hablo…
Itzel_15_6: Daddy! I love you hasta el cielo and hasta el piso a lot-ito. She meant: Daddy…..lot-ito. ("lots" and borrows the ending "ito" from "muchito")
Itzel_11_7: Let´s play with the oinkies! (meaning piggies)
Itzel_9_8: I am rasking your back. She meant: I am scratching your back. ("rascar" in Spanish)
Itzel_9_9: que fue eso que bringueo Tata. She meant: Que fue eso que me "trajo", Tata? She wanted to use the past of "bring".
Itzel_21_11: Don't do tramp daddy, refers to "trampa" She meant:"don't trick me".; Don't tramp me daddy;
Itzel_22_11: I am runeando. She meant: "I am running";

Borrowing is indeed a compensation strategy used by bilinguals. Grosjean (2002, cited in Hasbun, 2001) has claimed that this process occurs when the bilingual child compensates his lack of a particular word and resorts to the other language to fill in the gap of the language he or she has not yet learned.

8.2 Code Mixing

Another type of language switching is called mechanical switching although it occurs unconsciously. The purpose of the switch is to fill in unknown or unavailable terms in one of the languages. This is also called code-mixing. In other words, the speaker (child) momentarily cannot remember a term in one language but recalls it spontaneously in the other language. There are three types of code-mixing (Liu, 2006) which operate in bilingual communities:

a. insertion: the insertion of chunks of one language into a sentence that belongs to the other language. Example: "Vamos pues and buy an ice cream"

b. alternation: the succession of fragments in language A and B in a sentence, which is overall not identifiable as belonging to either A or B. Example: "Yo estaba crying and waiting pero no llegabas"
c. congruent lexicalization: the use of elements from either language in a structure that is wholly or partially shared by languages A and B. Example: "Bueno, in other words, the shirt que iba a poner was dirty".

Trudghill (2000) has explained that "speakers switch to manipulate or influence or define the situation as they wish, and to convey nuances of meaning and personal intention" (p. 105). In other words, it is intentional or un-intentional as a means of self-expression or a way to communicate on the contexts the speaker or child lives at. Through code-switching, the child builds a bridge or uses "triggered words" to avoid gaps during interaction. Unconsciously, the child seeks for the equivalent of what he or she wants to convey. If we compare this to first language acquisition, the child comes out with other communication strategies to convey meaning. In bilingual first language acquisition, children would take hold of another language as a mechanism or as a support to get the message through. For this reason, code-switching should not be seen as a blockage or a deficiency in language acquisition. On the same premise, Holmes (1992) has suggested that code-switching is also viewed as way of creating solidarity with people who speak a particular language. The child can detect at a certain age of bilingual first language acquisition "who speaks what" language and would just switch codes to develop interpersonal relationships.

The terms code-switching and code-mixing are many times used interchangeably. Though parents become anxious, apprehensive, and fearful to the fact that children code-switch and code-mix, it is a short-term phase and it is part of the developmental process to become bilingual. The strategies parents use to react to these processes can mark differences towards success. King & Mackey (2007) have highlighted several points to remember:

- Don't worry if your child mixes languages – language mixing is a normal (and short-lived) part of bilingual development.
- Trust your child is not confused – she may not know that she is using two languages, but there's plenty of evidence to suggest that she has two linguistic systems and is very quickly learning the rules of when to use which language.

- Know the difference between language mixing and code-switching when evaluating your child's language use.
- Keep a careful eye on quantity and quality of input and interaction in each language
- Set realistic expectations for the young learner – there are no perfect bilinguals in the world, and remember that language learning is a lifelong process. (p. 206)

9. Conclusion

In spite of the fact that the success of methods such as One parent One Language and Minority Language at Home to accomplish bilingualism are still mysterious and uncertain for many people, for others, it is a reality. In other words, there is some skepticism on the effectiveness of the amount of input required and on how a child can manage two languages at the same time.

The literature review in this paper has focused on several components such as consistency, persistency, naturalness, dedication, and quality and amount of devoted time a child needs to acquire a language. Because of these requirements, any child can speak a first language. Then, why not two or more simultaneous languages if the brain has that capacity? Indeed, those parents who have been victorious in this achievement can share their experiences to enlarge and enrich the great amount of research related to Bilingual First Language Acquisition. In the case of Itzel, her success in achieving BFLA has depended precisely on these elements. That is why she is fluent in English and Spanish.

In regards to "how early is enough", the main conclusions of this paper center that since birth. If parents want to raise a bilingual child and if they have willing determination into practicing the OPOL and the ML@H methods, which has been the case of Itzel, they should never succumb to the ups and downs they will experience as the child is assimilating both languages, in this case, English and Spanish. It is easy to give up. It is easy to just choose the easiest way out: speaking the native language. As a matter of fact, when children are learning two languages simultaneously, the richest and most valuable point in time is at their early stages of birth and should never cease until the ultimate goal is accomplished.

A supportive and rich environment at home is crucial. English is a foreign language in our country so raising a bilingual child at home seems a challenge. Indeed, it is a challenge. It is not just taking for granted that if one parent speaks the target language to the child, the child would

become bilingual. There are other requirements: reviewing literature in the OPOL and ML@H methods to know what to do, what not to do, and how it works, creating all the opportunities for sustainable input in the target language, being consistent and dedicated to speaking to the child in English as much as possible (40-60 % of time per week) to bond the language to the parent. In the case of Itzel, to accomplish her bilingualism, dedication of 40 % of parent vs child talk, engaged in daily situations, was compulsory.

Regarding the dilemma on "the amount of input required", the answer is the more, the better. Impressive and fruitful results towards bilingual first language acquisition can be accomplished by engaging the child into great quantities of input in the target language, primarily and more importantly, parent-child communication. However, many other resources can facilitate the process, such as reading stories in English, playing songs in English (DVDs), singing lullabies and sing-alongs in English(Itsy-Bitsy Spider, Twinkle-Twinkle Little Star, This Old Man, Old McDonald Had a Farm, among others), encouraging the child to sing the songs as they grow up, captivating and activating input with children's videos in YouTube, using pieces of software that promote baby's activation of the senses, or developing experiential learning with interactive toys (Fisher Price Fun-2-Learn Computer Cool School, Little Leap Platform). The use of all of these resources, communication strategies and hands-on activities, were part of Itzel's daily activities in her becoming bilingual.

The concern on how a child can manage two languages at the same time is more for parents and researchers rather than for the child himself or herself. Curiously the acquisition of the two languages happens unconsciously as when we learn our first language by itself. The child will not ask the "why"; the child would just understand and speak both languages, and as he or she grows older as a child and in the language, the child will detect by himself or herself who to speak to in one language or the other, and even to peers and family. Parents should understand that in this process of bilingual first language acquisition, the child will undergo into code-switching and code-mixing as the useful strategy for the development and meaningful growth of the two languages.

There is much to be studied, though. The acquisition of two languages since birth on, still needs comparable studies on the child's behavior regarding two languages and their development, specifically how children handle their knowledge of competence and proficiency on these two languages. This paper is just the beginning in the process of discussing how the child, Itzel, who lives in Costa Rica, has become bilingual in Spanish and English. Nonetheless,

this paper portrays a fact: Bilingual First Language Acquisition has been a reality in Costa Rica, and Itzel is a worthy addition to the many testimonies related to this issue.

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