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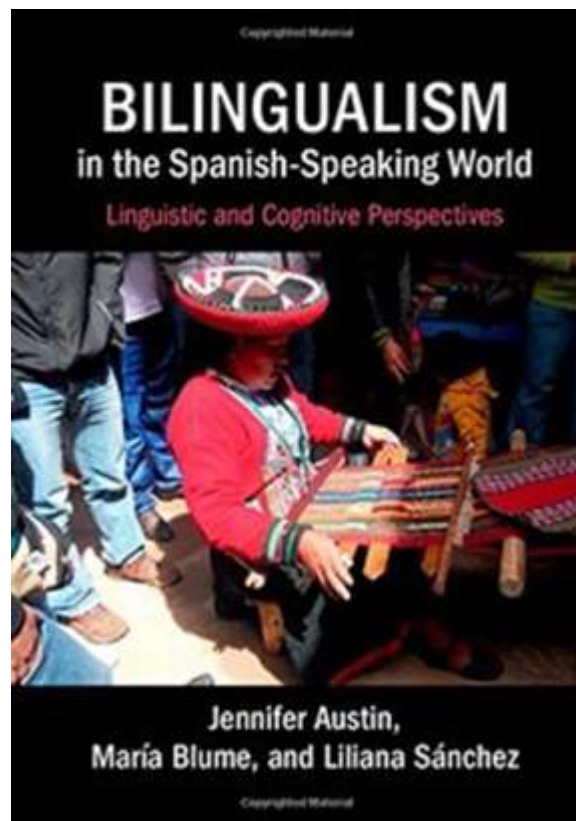
Austin, J., Blume, M., & Sánchez, L. (2015). *Bilingualism in the Spanish-speaking world: Linguistic and cognitive perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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In their new book, Jennifer Austin, María Blume, and Liliana Sánchez provide an introductory overview of the current research on bilingualism in the Spanish-speaking world and discuss its cognitive effects and linguistic characteristics from community-based perspectives. The authors examine the ways in which the latest research on bilingualism has been influenced by different theoretical frameworks that have evolved over time. They provide case studies within three diverse and distinct bilingual contexts: The United States (Spanish-English), Peru (Spanish-Quechua), and the Basque Country, Spain (Spanish-Euskara). The primary goal of the book is to shed light on community bilingualism found in language-contact situations, providing a wider understanding of some evolving concepts and clarifying how the outcomes of bilingualism differ depending on the individual's access to input in each of his/her languages. In all, *Bilingualism in the*



Spanish-Speaking World highlights the experiences of bilingual speakers and explores what it means to be bilingual in linguistically complex contexts.

The book is divided into three primary chapters, which are preceded by a rich introduction and followed by a brief concluding section. The introduction starts with definitions of important concepts in bilingualism, regarded as a dynamic process at both the individual and the societal level. This recurrent theme of the book is also in line with recent theorizing about bilingual languaging, such as Ofelia García's dynamic bilingualism model (2009), and in consonance with the linguistic complexities of our current globalized 21st century society. Similarly, the authors adopt and promote François Grosjean's notion that "the bilingual is not two monolinguals in one person" (Grosjean 1989), thus proposing a differentiation between monolinguals' learning from that of bilinguals'. Emphasizing the process of cross-linguistic interaction in bilingual learning and development, Austin and colleagues reject the interpretation that bilinguals suffer from a deficit in their languages competence and, instead, consider bilingualism as normal, advantageous, and natural. The final sections of the introduction present an overview of the grammars underlying the four languages analyzed in the book—Spanish, English, Euskara, and Quechua. A neatly summarized historical and socio-political context of bilingualism in Spain (focused on Euskara) as well as in the Americas (focused on English and Spanish in the US and Quechua in Latin America) concludes this first section.

In Chapter I, the writers present an overview of the evolution of the term bilingualism since the 1950s, offering concrete definitions and contrastingly complex, challenging terms that have been misinterpreted or wrongly applied in the past, such as proficiency vs. competence or

the differences between first (L1) and second language (L2) acquisition. The debated notion of the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) is also addressed, defined as "a period of time with a distinct onset and offset during which experience can lead to learning by an organism" (p.71). The authors emphasize the great disparity that still exists between linguists concerning the CP's beginning and ending stages. Among the earliest research in the sixties, Penfield and Lenneberg supported children's better language acquisition as opposed to adults' due to brain's plasticity, establishing the CP's duration to range from two years old until puberty. Some evidence in favor of a critical period for L1 acquisition is indicated by examples of three well-known case studies of children who were found under extreme circumstances of isolation. The most documented case is that of Genie, found at the age of 13. After being trained by numerous specialists—Skuse among others—for over eight years, her vocabulary grew to be equivalent to that of an 8-year-old, but her syntax remained abnormal. In contrast, seven out of the eight deprived children under age 7 studied by Skuse were shown to achieve language appropriate to their age level. These findings that contrast the cases of adolescent Genie with the younger children support the belief of Penfield and Lenneberg, among others, who propose that there is an offset for the critical period around puberty that, once reached, impedes normal language acquisition.

Chapter II is devoted to the authors' expertise, cognitive-oriented bilingual research, and examinations of the brains and minds of bilinguals that contrast their manner of operating with that of monolinguals. Moreover, they highlight the evidenced differences among each group, emphasizing the advantages that bilingual speakers count with. For instance, at the cognitive level, they point out an enhanced performance in the executive function as

well as in the working memory relative to monolinguals:

“Executive function skills are thought to be important for working memory, attention, focus, self-monitoring, motor skills, and social abilities. Executive function skills are highly correlated with academic achievement across subject disciplines, and are a better predictor of performance than IQ.” (p.112)

With regard to lexicon, the researchers comment on the powerful interconnection of bilinguals’ lexicons and highlight the strong evidence for non-selectivity when it comes to retrieving a word from one language: they also seem to activate words from their other language(s) at the same time. In other words, in a bilingual’s mind, languages are always competing for activation. However, this intrinsic connection between the lexicons was preceded by Revised Hierarchical Model (RHM) (Kroll and Steward 1994), a certainly influential approach that argued for the separation of these lexicons into separate stores—although sharing a common conceptual store between languages. Austin and colleagues contrast this former model to another one released four years later, the Bilingual Interactive Model (BIA) (Van Heuven, Dijkstra and Grainger 1998), which placed the lexicons within the same store.

The authors highlight other important points, including the transferability of phonological awareness skills from one language to the other and vice versa, a highly supported hypothesis, especially after 2000. Furthermore, literacy seems to be another aspect enhanced by bilingual children acquiring two languages. Nevertheless, the authors clarify that this enhancement only seems to work for children learning languages that share alphabetic scripts, such as Spanish and English or Euskara and Spanish, but not for non-alphabetic languages (e.g., Chinese)

learned at the same time as English. The authors also devote a section to the processes of language loss, aphasia, and attrition among bilingual children and adults, and different factors that affect L1 and L2 attrition, including the type of input and its availability, the age at which the learner was immersed in the L2, and the speaker’s proficiency levels in each language.

The final chapter provides a series of examples to illustrate the cross-linguistic influence phenomenon among languages in contact, focusing on Spanish in contact with Quechua, Euskara, and English. For example, concerning verbal inflection among bilinguals, children need more time for the acquisition of English verbal inflection because of the language’s poor verbal paradigm compared to that of Spanish, a language that owns a richer morphological evidence in its input. Other studies cited in the book by Paradis and Navarro (2003) provide evidence of the same cross-linguistic influence from English to Spanish in their participants’ explicit subject pronouns (SPs). The authors, however, partially attribute these results to the variety of Spanish that the children’s parents spoke—Caribbean—, which has a tendency to overuse SPs. Thus, adults’ input may be as well an influential predictor of cross-linguistic interference. These differences in the acquisition of morphological features are said to be parallel to the acquisition of lexical items across more or less complex languages.

The topic of this book was something I was familiar with and very interested in before reading the text. Nevertheless, I questioned how to incorporate complex concepts in the analysis, such as cognitive theories about bilingualism. In this sense, I can say that one of the books’ best qualities is its clear, user-friendly, and accessible narrative style. I particularly noticed this in chapter II, where the technical jargon concerning

neurological procedures was still very new to me. However, the use of definitions in simple language accompanied by frequent figures, including drawings of the brain and real pictures (e.g., EEG, fMRI), helped my understanding tremendously. The organization and division of chapters into clearly-distinguished subcategories also contributed to a smooth flow and ease of reading. In terms of content, the numerous references to the most relevant current and past research serve as one of the book's finest strengths and most appealing characteristics. But without a doubt, the major contribution of the book is its contrastive, syntactic analysis of the underlying grammars of Spanish, English, Quechua, and Euskara in language-contact situations.

One aspect of the book that might be reconsidered is the title, where the phrase "introduction to" would have clarified the readers' expectations from the beginning. Furthermore, the term "world" may be misleading, as the book primarily addresses bilingual contexts in northern Spain, Peru, and the United States. The "global" perspective that it seems to suggest is actually reduced to these three concrete language-contact situations, a relevant detail that may have been mentioned in the title to avoid unfulfilled expectations by the readers. In addition, the book does not

delve into socio-cultural matters specific to these countries, and only scratches the surface regarding bilingual education in these contexts. Readers looking for an in-depth, overarching approach to these topics can refer to more comprehensive books, such as Baker's *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (2011), or García's *Bilingual Education in the 21st century: A Global Perspective* (2009).

Overall, *Bilingualism in the Spanish-Speaking World* provides a general overview of the complexities of bilingualism and bilingual speakers at the cognitive and linguistic level, with a focus on Spanish, Euskara, Quechua, and English-speaking bilingual communities. The book serves as a starting reference not only for educators, ethnographers, linguists, or students who work with these interesting and evolving topics on a daily basis, but it also targets those motivated to learn "the basics" and historical evolution of bilingualism and curious about the implications of being bilingual in those specific contexts. Its recurrent incorporation of evolving contributions in literature is one of its strengths, and its approachable reading style accompanied by its organized, straightforward presentation of content makes it very accessible for apprentices in the subject matter.

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About the Reviewer

Irene Ramos-Arbolí is a lecturer in the Spanish and Portuguese Department at the Ohio State University (OSU). During her six years in the US, she has earned a master's degree in Spanish from Ohio University and another in Hispanics Linguistics from North Carolina State University. Since graduation, Irene has taught Spanish at the college and high school level, and is currently taking classes at OSU to prepare for work as a future doctorate student. Her current areas of interest include bilingual education and college students' attitudes towards bilingualism in the United States.



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