

THE BI-MULTILINGUAL CHILD – OVERCOMING MITHS AND BARRIERS: A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF BILINGUALISM

A CRIANÇA BI E MULTILÍNGUE – ULTRAPASSANDO MITOS E OBSTÁCULOS: UMA BREVE SÍNTESE SOBRE O BILINGUISMO

EL NIÑO BI Y MULTILINGÜE – SUPERANDO MITOS Y OBSTÁCULOS: UNA BREVE SÍNTESIS SOBRE EL BILINGÜISMO

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ABSTRACT: The present study represents a literature review on the area of bilingualism, in which it is intended to highlight some natural characteristics of bi- or multilingual speakers. It also aims to describe this important phenomenon, which is often shrouded in myths, uncertainties and misunderstandings on the part of parents, as well as some health professionals and teachers. Following the evolutionary chronology studies on bilingualism and behavior are also described, the bilingual cognitive development, and their possible advantages and disadvantages. It also addresses the existing connections between bilingualism and emotion in both the linguistic-social and psychological scope. Initial results are presented in the scope of bi-multilingualism in children, focusing on aspects such as the feeling of belonging to a social group, language-choice, fears and uncertainties of parents regarding bilingual education.

KEYWORDS: Bilingualism. Cognitive development. Bilingual behavior. Emotion. Identity.

RESUMO: O presente estudo representa uma revisão de literatura sobre a área do bilinguismo, no qual se pretende evidenciar algumas características naturais de falantes bilíngues ou multilíngues. Tem como objetivo também, descrever este importante fenômeno que, muitas vezes, está envolto por mitos, incertezas e equívocos tanto do lado dos pais, como de alguns profissionais da saúde e professores. Seguindo a cronologia da evolução dos estudos sobre o bilinguismo e comportamento, descrevem-se ainda desenvolvimento cognitivo bilingue, e suas possíveis vantagens e desvantagens. Aborda também as conexões existentes entre o bilinguismo e a emoção tanto no escopo linguístico-social como psicológico. São apresentados resultados iniciais no âmbito do bi-multilinguismo em crianças focando-nos em aspectos como o sentimento de pertença a um grupo social, language-choice, e também receios e incertezas dos pais quanto à educação bilingue.

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Bilingüismo. Desenvolvimento cognitivo. Comportamento bilingüe. Emoção. Identidade.*

RESUMEN: *El presente estudio representa una revisión de la literatura sobre el ámbito del bilingüismo, en la que se pretende destacar algunas características naturales de los hablantes bilingües o multilingües. Tiene como objetivo también, describir este importante fenómeno que, muchas veces está envuelto por mitos, incertidumbres e malentendidos tanto por parte de los padres, así como de algunos profesionales de la salud y profesores. Siguiendo la cronología evolutiva de los estudios sobre el bilingüismo y comportamiento se describen etapas del desarrollo cognitivo bilingüe, y sus posibles ventajas y desventajas. También aborda las conexiones existentes entre bilingüismo y la emoción tanto en el ámbito lingüístico-social como psicológico. Los primeros resultados se presentan en el ámbito del bi-multilingüismo en los niños, centrándose en aspectos como el sentimiento de pertenencia a un grupo social, language-choice, los miedos e incertidumbres de los padres con respecto a la educación bilingüe.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Bilingüismo. Desarrollo cognitivo. Comportamiento bilingüe. Emoción. Identidad.*

Introduction

We know that language, in its different forms, is the main instrument of communication used by man to interact with the world and, in particular, language is seen as a system of specific codes, recognized by a particular community of which it is a part. For Tomasello (2010, our translation)

[...] Language, or rather linguistic communication, is not a type of object, formal or other, is a form of social action constituted by social conventions to achieve social purposes, based on at least some shared understandings and shared purposes between users.

Hamers and Blanc (2000) claim that with globalization, migration of people increases and contact with new and different cultures is inevitable, resulting in a significant number of multicultural societies. These mixed communities lead to bi-multilingual families, whose children grow up and identify with more than one culture, and in many circumstances speak different languages to communicate with their own parents, who speak different languages. According to Shaffer and Kipp (2010) "the acquisition of language is clearly a holistic process intertwined with the cognitive and social development of the child and with the social and cultural life of the child".

Bilingualism is already a common phenomenon in today's world and is not exclusive to, nor privilege, of any specific social class. Over time, one has been trying to understand not

only the process itself, but also the cognitive effects that bilingualism can bring, as well as its positive or negative effects.

In the work we propose here, the main objective is to highlight some of the possible influences of bilingualism, according to an interdisciplinary approach - psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic - in the manifestation and understanding of emotions, as well as, in some way, "demystify" *the occurrences of code-switching* and code-mixing within this emotional and affective perspective.

With regard to bilingual *si*, in the case of individual differences or even the very overview of this phenomenon that covers much of the world (as in the case of immigrants, refugees and those welcomed), studies related to bilingualism still lack a more consolidated basis and structure. There is a need, therefore, to bring more information to the population in order to clarify some thoughts and definitions, often mistaken. With the large number of families who have left their countries of origin, who today raise their children in countries of different languages and cultures, it is common for these parents to feel insecure and afraid about the education they should provide for their children. In these contexts, the various doubts and 'fears' related to bilingualism and cultural identity appear; acquisition and learning of languages, integration and membership of a particular social group.

The reflection and some small observations presented here seek, in a succinct and objective way, to sustain relevant information based on empirical studies on the processing of language in bilingual and monolingual, the relationship of bilinguals with emotions in each language, and the consequences of bilingualism throughout life.

Studies and definition of bilingualism

Traditionally, the area of bilingualism investigates the competence and performance of speakers who communicate in two or more languages, from a perspective of the phenomenon of bilingualism itself. Recently, concerns arose about the limitations of these studies in this perspective, which made this view expanded and that these studies were also examined and analyzed as phenomena of trilingual acquisition, acquisition of third language, competence and performance of multilingual speakers (CENOZ; HUFSEIN; JESSNER, 2001; 2003).

In the area of second language acquisition (SLA), *competence* is designated as the unconscious knowledge that the speaker has of linguistics, sociolinguistics, and communicative principles that allow him to interpret a particular language and typically deduced through metalinguistic tests. Following recent developments in the area of linguistic

anthropology, *performance refers* not only to the language in use, but also to creative constructions, since the individual uses creativity both in learning a LE (foreign language) and in the acquisition of his Mother Tongue (LM). Finally, proficiency generally refers to the level of achievements in a particular language, concerning skills such as writing and speech, which are measured through standard tests (PAVLENKO, 2007).

With regard to the history and tradition of bilingualism, in this work the term *bilingualism* is designated as the research area that examines both bilingualism and multilingualism (BAKER, 2011; LUNA; RINGBERG, 2014. PERACCHIO, 2008; ROMAINE, 2001). These phenomena, which strive to study and analyze the production, process, development and understanding of two or more languages.

Bilingualism is defined in different ways according to the context in which it is inserted. Bloomfield (1933) and his thought affiliated with structural linguistics, where conceptualization is homogeneous, defines a bilingual person as one who can speak two languages with the same fluency as native speakers, that is, the knowledge and perfect use of one or more languages. For Weinreich (1953), bilingualism would be the alternating use of two languages. Already according to Haugen (1953), bilingualism would begin with the ability to produce complete sentences and with meaning in the second language. And finally, according to Edwards (2004), the first definitions of bilingualism were limited only to defining it as the perfect use of two different languages. However, the most recent definitions allow a greater variation of what is the definition and what are the skills of the bilingual individual.

For Grosjean (1985) to be bilingual is not just two monolinguals in one person. From the perspective of psycholinguistics, bilingualism can be the knowledge and use of two or more languages, and the presentation of information in two different languages or dialects in everyday life (GROSJEAN, 2013). According to the author, this definition would include from the immigrant who speaks with difficulty the language of the country that welcomed him (reasons for survival and citizenship) to the professional interpreter who is fully fluent in both languages (professional and economic reasons). And so, it is understood that, in addition to the diversity among speakers, in general, everyone shares something in common, all use two or more languages in everyday life.

Butler (2013) divide bilingualism into three different categories, following the typology initially proposed by Weinreich (1953) concerning the organization of linguistic codes and units of meaning in memory: compound, coordinated and subordinate *bilingualism*. In compound bilingualism, two language codes are processed simultaneously. In this type of

bilingualism, the words "book" and "tome" have the same concept. One can take for example a child who acquires, at the same time, two languages given the exposure and input he has to both, living in a bilingual environment.

In coordinated bilingualism, linguistic codes are separated, each with its set of units of meaning. Thus, using the previous example, "book" and "tome" have different units of meaning for a school-age child who uses a language at home and another language different in the context of formal/school learning, (WEINREICH, 1953). As for subordinate bilingualism, the linguistic codes of the second language (L2) are interpreted by filtering through the first (L1), i.e., the lexeme "book" would go through a process of "translation".

Following the classical typology of bilingualism concerning proficiency in two languages, proposed first by Peal and Lambert (1962), bilingualism is divided *into balanced and dominant*. In balanced bilingualism, *the speaker* presents proficiency, mastery and equal competencies in both L1 and L2. In the dominant bilingualism, L2 proficiency may vary, but it does not reach the same level of dominance and competence of L1, i.e., L1 will be the dominant language.

The question of how bilingualism can be defined receives universal attention, it is necessary to understand, first of all, its individual, psychological, cultural and social context for it to be interpreted. Thus, the existing collaboration of research in various areas of knowledge such as anthropology, linguistics, psychology, neuroscience, among others is justified.

Bilingualism: Culture and Identity

Biculturalism is still a little studied topic within the vast area of bilingualism. Bilingual bicultural, or only, bicultural are those individuals who have internalized two different cultures and are able to communicate in the languages associated with these cultures (LUNA; RINGBERG, 2014. PERACCHIO, 2008). We often come up with bicultural who claim to "feel like a different person" when speaking different languages (LAFROMBOISE; COLEMAN; GERTON, 1993). We remind, therefore, that bilingualism and biculturalism are not necessarily coexisting and that it is quite possible to find bilingual people who are not bicultural. There are also cases where immigrants have acquired a second language and learned about the culture of the country that welcomed them, while also maintaining their own languages and culture of origin.

According to Grosjean (2008), there is a great impact on bilingual bicultural at the personal (psychological/cultural) and cognitive level, and on the knowledge and processing of the language. Nguyen and Benet-Martinez (2007) thus characterize bicultural individuals: 1. Take part in different levels of two or more cultures; 2. Adapt, at least in part, their attitudes, behaviors, values, languages, among others, to this culture; 3. Combine and blend aspects of the cultures involved. Some of these aspects come from one or the other culture, while others are mixtures of these cultures.

It is common to say that bicultural people manage and adapt their behavior in certain situations where language exchange is necessary, however, there is an erroneous idealization that language exchange also entails the exchange of personality. If that were possible, what would it be like with monocultural son? Since they have only one culture to mirror. On the other hand, bicultural subjects are able to modify their behavior and attitude according to the occasion or context. In slight, bicultural change their "cultural base" to better adapt to the cultural context of the environment in which they are. Therefore, it is not the language that influences this change, but the circumstances and the place.

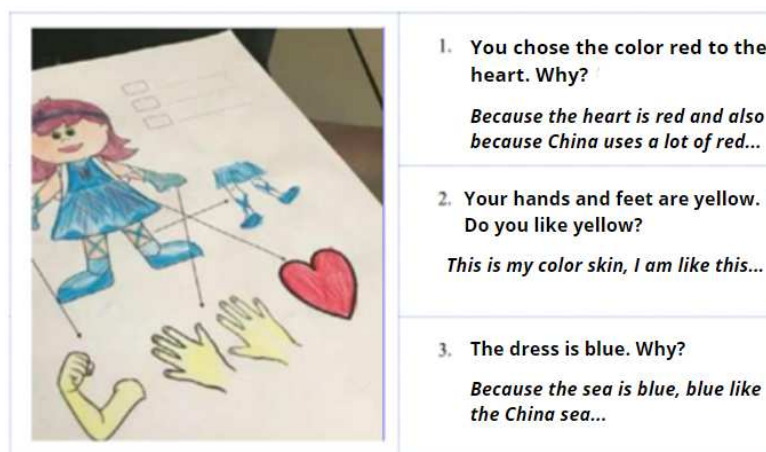
It is essential to emphasize that language and identity have an intrinsic relationship, that is, the act of speaking the language belonging to a given community, awakens in the speaker, a sense of belonging to it. Bialystok (2009) states that bilinguals are linked to more than one ethnic-cultural community by language. In other words, the bilingual speaker is not only connected to two languages, he is also connected to two distinct systems of sounds and lexicons, surrounded by a complex socio-political-cultural context, and must know how to deal not only with linguistic issues, but also with the culture of more than one community.

A previous study by Nunes and Akioma (2019) shows that even at a young age it is possible to exist already, in the individual, an idea of belonging to a new culture where the child lives and is educated. In the analysis of a drawing painted by Carla (fictitious name), a 6-year-old Caucasian child can measure, by the chosen colors and explanations of the child that she has strong emotional connections with China, and the fact of using the Portuguese language at home with her parents, the Chinese language to play with friends in the neighborhood, and the English language at school, in no way interferes with the great affection and respect you feel for the place where you grew up. Carla is the daughter of Brazilian parents and it was in their country that she was born. With close to 1 year old he went to live in China, in a city characteristic of having a large Brazilian community, close to 3,000 people, and of great connection to the country of origin and its traditions. This community lives, even, very close. Every year the family spends about 2 months in Brazil, so

Carla knows her home country well. Among several activities, in a study on bilingualism, the child was asked to paint a color drawing of his choice and, in the end, he was asked to explain the colors used.

It was possible to notice that the colors chosen in much were related to the feelings of the child, denoting an emotional connection with China. Thus, the blue dress reminiscent of the China Sea is probably the first reminiscence it has of the sea. Red, which she says is widely used in China, alludes not only to the flag of the People's Republic of China, but also to all major Chinese festivities. Curious, it is the yellow hands that, apparently, would be hers, since the color of Asians, according to the classification of human groups in anthropology, is yellow. There is a deep rooted in Chinese culture and traditions on the part of the child, to point out that Carla speaks Portuguese, English and Chinese.

Figure 1 - Carla's painting and answers to the questions asked by the authors.



Source: Nunes e Akioma (2019)

Edwards (2004) emphasizes, when he states: "*Beyond utilitarian and unemotional instrumentality, the heart of bilingualism is belonging*", that is, much more than the use of one or more language systems, the most important issues in bilingualism are the reasons and social and psychological factors involved in this process.

For Pavlenko (2005), different types of bilinguals behave differently, in natural and experimental contexts. At the same time, bilingual bicultural scans may develop different representations from those that are considered sequential or late bilingual; and among late bilinguals, speakers of a foreign language with minimal exposure to the target language may differ from L2 speakers who socialize in the target language within the community. According to the author, the concepts that influence the spoken language would be: *1. Individual factors* that include the learning histories of the speaker's language, the dominance

and proficiency of the language, the degree of biculturalism and acculturation of the individual and the ability to master the issue; 2. *Interactional factors* that include the context of language interaction, the linguistic state of the interlocutor (e.g. Familiarity with speakers); 3. *Linguistic and psycholinguistic factors* that include the degree of the relationship between representations in the language in question (in concepts of comparison) and the degree to which the concept of one language can be expressed in another and the semantic value it conveys.

Recent investigations in the area of bilingualism concerning the performance of verbal and non-verbal tasks in natural contexts show that conceptual representations can be transformed into socialization in the second language, in adulthood. These results are extremely important to study the implications of bilingual mental lexicon studies. This suggests that the conceptual representations (tests performed with name and recognition tasks) of bilingual individuals are a complex and dynamic phenomenon.

Consequences of bilingualism on cognitive development

Positive cognitive effects

Supported by numerous studies, bilingualism has been linked to the cognitive development of children and adults revealing that it has advantages and disadvantages, which is often the main concern of parents and educators.

Ellen Bialystok (2005) conducted studies in bilingual children and cognitive development, where she concluded that bilingualism accelerates the development of cognitive functions in general, related to attention and inhibition, which is a facilitator for the fulfillment and processing of tasks where these functions are necessary. Lee and Kim (2011) observed that bilinguals have certain advantages, and thus explains that the higher the degree of linguistic competence of the bilingual speaker, the more creative it is.

In a study conducted by Costa, Hernandez, and Sebastián-Gallés (2008), involving young adults (with an average of 22 years of age) *they realized that bilinguals performed better than monolinguals in attentional network task* (ANA *et al.*, 2002). The authors concluded that "these results show that bilingualism influences the achievement of efficient care mechanisms for young adults who should be at the peak of their attention capacities".

Studies by Bialystok, Craik and Freedman (2007) suggest that bilingualism can protect against Alzheimer's disease, a disease that worsens over the years and consists of the loss of cognitive functions. To support this assumption, researchers in the field (DRISCOLL;

TRONCOSO, 2011) began to consider the cognitive *reserve* (CR) views and after examining 184 case studies and analyzing bilingual and monolingual patients with Alzheimer's, observed that the symptoms of the disease in bilinguals appear four years later compared to monolingual patients. A more recent study conducted by Calabria *et al.* (2020) emphasizes that bilingualism can contribute to cognitive reserves against neurodegenerative diseases, and that active bilingualism may be the greatest ally for the delay of the first symptoms of Mild Cognitive Impairment (CLC). A meta-analysis containing twenty-one studies on bilingualism and protection against cognitive decline completed by Anderson, Hawrylewicz and Grundy (2020) revealed evidence of a moderate effect size in age-related protective effects of the onset of primary Alzheimer's symptoms, however, weak evidence was found that bilingualism actually prevents the occurrence of these neurodegenerative dysfunctions. Anyway, it is important to point out that, and our brain can be compared to a muscle it, like any other, needs to be trained to stay healthy. Nowadays, it is increasingly common to find individuals over 65 to learn new languages, arts and crafts, and there is a notion that our brain needs to be constantly surprised and stimulated.

Bialystok studies (2018) indicate that bilingual speakers experience different "bilingual adaptations" throughout their lives, such as: babies who grow up in a bilingual environment develop different care strategies; In childhood, bilingual children are more adept at conflict-based tasks and because of this, they may have a reduced vocabulary in one of the languages; in young adults, there are consistent changes in the structural and functional properties of the brain; in the elderly, they are understood to be more resilient to cognitive decline and symptoms of dementia.

Genesse (2010) recommends that in order to achieve full cognitive benefits in the education and literacy of a proficient bilingualism, all children should have access to bilingual education in order to prepare them for today's globalized society.

The above-mentioned studies advocated a positive correlation between bilingualism and cognition, although we still encounter some resistance and insecurity regarding bilingual education. Therefore, it is essential that more research in this area presents empirical evidence on the beneficial effects of bilingual education, not only on cognition and linguistic tasks, but also the sociocultural and interactional benefits.

Unfavorable cognitive effects

Previous studies of the 1920s (e.g., BERRY, 1922; GIARDINI; ROOT, 1923; JORDAN, 1921; RIGG, 1928), pointed out a negative correlation regarding the relationship between bilingualism and cognition. Probably, this fact was influenced by the lack of experimental rigor and also by the sociopolitical anti-immigration view that prevailed in the United States at that time. These unfavorable results to cognition lasted until approximately the 1960s. Baker (2008) states that the dominant result of most studies of this time was that bilinguals were inferior to monolingual, particularly in terms of verbal competence.

These studies had in common serious methodological weaknesses and also statistics. Moreover, the studies of this period did not take into account some additional factors such as socio-economic indicators, school situation and emotional aspects (HOFFMANN, 1991, p. 121).

With regard to bilingual individuals, some evidence of disadvantages in the domain and production of words concerning monolingual individuals was found. For example, bilinguals are slower at speaking the names of the engravings in both languages compared to the monolingual ones (IVANOVA; COAST, 2008). Studies by Gollan, Montoya and Bonanni (2005) and Gollan *et al* (2008) suggested that bilinguals suffer from a great difficulty associated with the "label" of words due to the large number of words present in both languages. Thus, this growing number of words leads to a weak connection between each word and a particular concept. These effects do not only happen with bilinguals, but also with monolinguals, but the occurrence in the latter is less frequent.

Studies focused on perceiving the opinion of parents about the creation of a bi/multilingual child, show the existence of some confusion that makes parents apprehensive, fearing the loss of their "mother tongue", thus facing difficulties in developing the sense of belonging to a group, and also are, consequent problems of socialization of their children. The table, taken by Nunes and Akioma (2019), portrays the summarized opinions of parents on the pros and cons of bilingual early childhood education.

Table 1 - Advantages and disadvantages of bilingual education according to the parents interviewed in the study

ADVANTAGES OF THE BILINGUAL EDUCATION	DISADVANTAGES OF THE BILINGUAL EDUCATION
More independent and open minded	Delay in verbal competence
More flexible and respectful towards different cultures	Difficulties expressing feelings
Better and more job opportunities	Not being fluent in any language
Knowing Chinese, Portuguese and English, they can go wherever they want in the world	Socialization and integration problems
	Loss of mother language
	Mixing languages and structural errors

Source: Nunes e Akioma (2019)

As can be seen from Table 1, parents remain concerned with issues related to feelings expression, fluency and comprehension problems, loss of mother tongue, difficulties in socialization and integration, and also language delay. Although they may realize that a bilingual child-individual has greater and better job opportunities, that it is more independent and better welcome different cultures and thoughts parents do not want in any way to perceive some kind of 'delay' in their children. The preservation of these ideas is not the exclusive 'fault' of parents, since it is still quite common to find teachers, doctors, psychologists and other professionals who advise parents not to raise them as bilingual, since this option can bring them many problems. These difficulties explained to parents as creators of great confusion and mental fatigue, identity problems, delay in the acquisition and development of the child's language and, even causes schizophrenia (HUANG, 2017. p. 132) make parents obviously want to 'protect' their children.

It is increasingly important that these myths and concomitant fears be deconstructed, especially in view of the globalized world in which we live and the need for bi or multilingual active citizens who can move in any cultural, social and, of course linguistic environment.

Emotions and bilingualism

According to Scherer (2005), emotion is an event in which there are several changes that are interconnected and that are our body's response to a stimulus, which can be internal or external. Damásio (1996, our translation) explains emotion as

A mental evaluation process, simple or complex, with dispositional responses and this process, mostly directed to the body [...] resulting in an emotional state of the body [...] directed to the brain itself (neurotransmitter nuclei in the brain stem), resulting in additional mental changes.

Each of the emotions contemplates a family or related states.

Although the Human Being believes that he can control his emotions, they are much more "visible" than one might think, hence the development of several subareas of knowledge linked to clinical linguistics, neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics and forensic linguistics. One begins to understand the individual, from an early age, by the way he expresses himself, choosing one or another language to express different feelings or emotions.

In short, emotion is a mixture between psychological, cognitive, phenomena (biological, physical and cultural) and complex behaviors, according to Ortony and Turner (1990).

Although studies related to the role of emotions in learning a new language are limited, researchers in the area emphasize the issues between language and emotions, leaving the case of the language of emotions missing.

Arsenian (1945) was the first to offer a more understandable study on bilingualism, which also included an analysis of affective values. Weinreich (1953), in his text *Languages in Contact*, comments that bilinguals may have a different emotional connection with their languages and that emotional involvements such as friendship, romance, pride of living in a new country create situations that can conflict or even replace the mother tongue. It also emphasizes the phenomenon of *affective lending*, that is, the use of lexical and grammatical categories of one language to enhance affectivity in the other language.

For Fussell (2002), emotions play a crucial role in the lives of both monolingual and bi-multilingual. Sharing emotions during personal interactions or through written communications is an essential social activity, and is also a skill that helps keep us physically and mentally healthy.

Psycholinguistic studies related to bilingualism showed that bilinguals experience an emotional distance between the first and second languages. Javier and Marcos (1989) suggest that the individual when switching to the second language could represent an attempt to avoid anxiety conditions. Other studies have pointed out that anxiety can be caused by emotional reasons. Interviews with late bilinguals by Grosjean (1982) and case studies with late bilinguals in therapy indicated, for the vast majority, that personal involvements are expressed in the first language and indifferent subjects, in the second language (AMATI-MEHLER; ARGENTIERI; CANESTRI, 1990). We highlight, therefore, that it is completely understandable that bilinguals, especially those who live in function of two or more linguistic environments, are emotionally connected to these linguistic communities at different levels.

As opposed to previous arguments, Aneta Pavlenko (2007), a linguist and researcher born in Ukraine and based in the *United States of America*, in her book *Emotions and Multilingualism*, declares that thinking of the first language (L1) as the language of emotions and treating the second language (L2) as an indifferent language is to make the relationship between languages too simple, emotions, and identities in bi-multilingualism. And that if so, the question of the language of the heart of bi-multilingual individuals would be misinterpreted, because there is no single reference to this subject and different answers may arise depending on the very interpretation of the language.

Another case study on the friction of the English language (L2) conducted by Tomiyama (1999) in an eight-year-old Japanese child revealed that the child lost confidence and competence when expressing feelings in L2, and that only alternating to L1 could he make more emotional and affective statements.

Thus, these findings guide us to the affective factors that impact code switching and *language-choice*.

Studies conducted by Akioma (2018) indicated that children of early childhood education in a Brazilian school in China already have their language preferences when communicating in different situations and contexts. There are even some children who, being speakers of Portuguese mother tongue, even confide that they do not know how to play in Portuguese, given that the most playful context with friends and colleagues – given the linguistic diversity – happens in English. Educators of the Brazilian school claim that this mixture and alternation of codes have become something normal, being part of the daily life of these children from an early age. Thus explains the Secretary General Raquel, when she declares:

"All languages (laughs) come out the three most spoken languages here: Portuguese, English and Chinese. One hour they're talking Portuguese, another time... especially here in early childhood education, we watch a lot when they are playing and they start speaking in English, so... naturally! For them it is natural that [...] they end up like this, automatically, without even noting [...] students with Chinese mothers play a lot in Chinese too" (Our translation)

Thus, we can observe that, while still very small, it is natural for them to frequently mix and/or alternate languages, without any impediment to communication and intelligibility. Gradually, with the cognitive and metalinguistic growth of children, the mixture of languages

decreases and the individual adapts to the situation, context and interlocutor to better communicate and express their feelings.

Final considerations and suggestions for future studies

In this synthesis, definitions were presented regarding the vast area of bilingualism, covering relevant topics on the impact of bilingualism on cognitive development, biculturalism and identity, along with the conception of emotions.

Bilingualism is a still very complex phenomenon that involves numerous internal and external factors that have not yet been discussed in detail, as in the case of executive functions (attention, inhibitory control and memory), the production and oral perception in an analysis of phonological development, bilingual reading, question of identity and sense of belonging, among others. Thus, we emphasize the importance of further studies related to bilingualism, emphasizing that what we describe and present here should be seen as a generalized analysis. However, this work is solidly based on the most classical to the most recent bibliographies on bilingualism, presenting examples and testimonies that, in a way, may allow us to question or even overturn many of the doubts and fears that exist within bi and multilingualism that are, after all, common in contemporary societies.

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