

# *The social turn in child multilingual acquisition studies: The role of input*

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With reference to the study of bi/multilingual acquisition in children, Ortega (2013) calls for a *bi/multilingual turn* in late second language acquisition research in which studies address the whole individual and his/her linguistic repertoires, and not just the second language. Studies of bi/multilingual acquisition in children, on the other hand, can be said to have undergone a *social turn*, with studies increasingly addressing the impact of social factors and variation in the child's linguistic environment on the child's development of two or more languages (cf. Pearson 2007; Ghimenton, Chevrot & Billiez 2013; Bridges & Hoff 2014). The study of child language acquisition has been the domain of developmental psycholinguistics, which has also dominated research on bilingual and multilingual acquisition in children, with a focus on the language-internal and individual cognitive mechanisms at play in the acquisition process. Some developmental psycholinguists bridge the gap between their discipline and sociolinguistics by studying variation and social meaning as an inherent part of the acquisition process (cf. De Houwer 2011, Chevrot & Foulkes 2013). The ultimate question is Why do some children exposed to two or more languages acquire these languages while others do not? An important issue in this regard concerns the input these young children receive and what characterizes the nature of this input. Although the *social turn* has manifested itself in the current child bi-/multilingual acquisition research landscape, earlier studies espousing an interactional language socialization approach also attempted to bridge the gap (cf. Döpke 1992, Lanza 1997/2004). Moreover, the burgeoning interdisciplinary field of family language policy aims to draw on anthropology, sociolinguistics as well as developmental psycholinguistic approaches to studying childhood bilingualism and multilingualism (King & Fogle 2013).

In my talk I will outline the various trends and distinct perspectives in the evolving *social turn* in the study of early bilingualism, examining the explicit and implicit epistemological assumptions, particularly in regard to the study of input. My focus will be on bi-/multilingual first language acquisition although I will also bring in early childhood second language acquisition. This critical overview will assess what we currently know about why some children exposed to two or more languages acquire these languages while others do not. In conclusion, a projection will be made of the current potentials for bridging the gap between more psycholinguistically/cognitively-oriented approaches and more sociolinguistically oriented approaches to the study of early bilingualism in children.

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