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Chapter 26. Bilingualism and Bidialectalism

Jean-Pierre Chevrot and Anna Ghimenton

1 Introduction

While linguists have long debated the conceptual and ideological difficulties of distinguishing between a language and a variety of a language, and they find the distinction bewildering, children seem not to have any problems acquiring languages (in bilingual acquisition) and acquiring dialects (in bidialectal acquisition). In fact, very early in development, they are capable of distinguishing between typologically very close linguistic varieties as much as between more distant languages in a bilingual acquisition setting (see Serratrice, this volume). Infants as young as 5 or 6 months prefer to look at native speakers rather than speakers with a foreign accent (Kinzler, Dupoux & Spelke, 2007). Likewise, babies as young as 5 months of age are sensitive to the differences separating their home dialect from other dialects (Butler, Floccia, Goslin & Panneton, 2011). Children's capacity to discriminate between languages as much as between language varieties suggests that subtle differences in the way others speak are critical cues for organizing the social world. Moreover, their precocious sensitivity to minute differences between varieties of a language legitimizes the research agenda of studying bidialectal acquisition and comparing it with bilingual acquisition. However, as we explain in more detail in Section 2, such an agenda cannot circumvent the difficulty involved in contrasting two objects - language and language variety - with fuzzy borders.

The question of whether bidialectalism is achieved through the same process as bilingualism has seldom been addressed, mainly because the two have tended to be viewed as separate objects of research. A way of estimating the similarity of these two acquisitional processes is to ask whether bilingual acquisition and dialect acquisition are shaped by the same attitudes and influenced by the same factors that have been of basic concern in sociolinguistics (e.g., regional background, gender, and socioeconomic status). The present chapter tackles these questions. More specifically, it asks how learners come to perceive the social value of different varieties, that is, how they develop language attitudes towards them. It also addresses the question of how individuals learn to produce dialectal varieties. We focus on language attitudes and production within two main life stages: (1) young childhood to preadolescence, and (2) adolescence to adulthood. This grouping in two broad periods is necessary given the paucity of studies focusing on dialect acquisition, in particular when it involves mature and aging adults. Moreover, we focus on the acquisition of spoken varieties,

leaving aside the analysis of written realizations of these dialectal varieties as they appear in social media, for example. To our knowledge there has been no investigation of their acquisition in this context, although there has been attention to the actual use of different varieties in written discourse (see, e.g., Jaffe, Androutsopoulos, Sebba & Johnson, 2012). But first we turn to a brief but necessary discussion of the bewildering difficulties involved in trying to distinguish between a language and a variety of a language (in Section 2) and the settings and contexts in which learners may be exposed to different varieties (in Section 3).

2 On the Difficulty of Defining Dialect and Language

Tackling issues focused on the acquisition of several languages and on the acquisition of several dialects means that both the terms *dialect* and *language* are clearly definable. Yet, finding two separate and clear-cut definitions for the two terms without defining these in terms of each other is an arduous task.

The conceptualization of what is a dialect and what is a language is the result of a unique diachronic process combining global differentiation and local convergence between linguistic uses. Moreover, the academic specialization and disciplinary realm in which each of the notions is conceptualized - sociolinguistics and dialectology for *dialect*; typology, general linguistics, bilingualism or first and second language acquisition for *language* - add to the confusion. Consider, for instance, the challenges involved in conceptualizing the status of Alsatian (*Alsacien*) spoken in the northeastern part of France (the Alsace) and of Venetian (*Veneto*) spoken in the Veneto, one of Italy's northeastern regions. Alsatian and Venetian are often considered dialects, including by their speakers, whilst historical and linguistic arguments converge to a categorization of each of them as languages.

The difficulty that sociolinguists find in objectively underscoring dialects' internal coherence by looking at the co-variation of sociolinguistic variables (e.g., Guy & Hinskens, 2013) makes one wonder whether the notions of dialect and language are mere ideological and political constructs. Speakers from stigmatized groups may fight to ensure the recognition of their culture and this activism may promote the variety they speak every day to the status of language. Considering a variety as a language or a dialect thus is also a matter of ideology and power relationships between groups.

A common definition is that dialects are different varieties of the same language. This definition, however, cannot be satisfactory because it defines *dialect* in relation to *language*, without defining what the latter refers to. We take the perspective that languages are variable and evolving systems made of several social or regional dialects, overlapping or nested into

each other. This heterogeneity of languages is due to their internal dynamics, the contacts between them, and their links with social organization, which is in itself evolving, composite and multi-layered (Laks, 2013). In the same vein, we insist on the fact that dialects have a gradient quality, and we replace discrete categories with a continuous distance between two varieties. Such a distance would be (at least) tridimensional and would include geographical and linguistic distance (operationalized by a comparative analysis of systems and mutual intelligibility), as well as distance in the sphere of identity and politics. Building on this perspective, comparing bilingual and bidialectal acquisition becomes a little clearer. Indeed, examining the extent to which bidialectal acquisition differs from bilingual acquisition entails questioning how the acquisition of two varieties depends on the geographical and linguistic distance separating them, as well as on their identity value and their sociopolitical definition. Consequently, adult production of varieties of a language is influenced by numerous social factors such as the speaker's regional background, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), social network structure, as well as factors pertaining to the context of speech, such as the topics of exchange or the degree of formality of the interaction. Moreover, speakers assign social values to the varieties involved and adopt positive or negative attitudes towards them (Niedzielski & Preston, 2000). As a consequence, the linguistic forms that make up different varieties carry socio-indexical information that is nonlinguistic in nature, in that it refers to groups of individuals distinguished on the basis of categories such as gender, SES, regional origin, or ethnicity (e.g., Foulkes, 2010). This understanding of both language and dialect as objects that are internally heterogeneous, gradient in nature, and with fuzzy borders equips us well to shift our attention from acquiring languages (in bilingual acquisition) to acquiring dialects (in bidialectal acquisition), as we do in this chapter.

3 Settings and Contexts in which People Acquire Different Oral Varieties

There are numerous settings in which two or more varieties are acquired. Relative timing and contexts of acquisition are two important dimensions that shape this diversity. Depending on the age at which one comes into contact with two language varieties, speakers' repertoires will be formed either through a simultaneous or sequential acquisition process. For languages, the resulting situation is either bilingual first language acquisition (BFLA), early second language acquisition (ESLA), or second language acquisition (SLA). The cut-off ages separating one period from another have been much debated. De Houwer (2009) argues that BFLA differs from ESLA in that, in the former, the exposure to a second language is present from birth whilst in the latter children are exposed to a second language

(L2) after they have heard only a single language (often up to the time they start day-care or pre-school) but before any formal literacy instruction. SLA refers to the acquisition of a second language after the age of 6, or after formal literacy instruction has begun (see Ortega, this volume).

These distinctions can be transferred to the acquisition of different dialect varieties. Thus, we refer to first bidialectal acquisition when two or more dialect varieties are acquired from birth, that is, in the context of socialization within the family unit. Should one variety be acquired at a later stage, within a socialization context other than the family unit (e.g., extended family, school, through relocation, etc.), we speak of (early) second dialect acquisition.

There are four typical living contexts in which children and adults learn more than one variety of what is commonly seen as one sole language. The first concerns children born and growing up in communities where numerous varieties of a single language are used. From early on (but not necessarily simultaneously) children acquire traits of the varieties in contact. The rate of acquisition will depend on the degree of exposure to each of the varieties and their social and identity values (see Fuller, this volume, for related discussion of the role of language ideologies; see Armon-Lotem & Meir, this volume, for the role of exposure in early bilingualism). This will be true, for example, of children who are in contact with mainstream American English and a sociolect, African American English. It will also be true for children who live in a country where the regional varieties of one language are used simultaneously along with the standard variety, as, for instance, in many parts of Germany (although here most children will additionally be confronted with a foreign language through school). There is also the widespread situation of young children who are in contact with speakers using other kinds of varieties (e.g., teenage dialects or dialects of different socioeconomic groups) than those spoken by their parents.

The second type of context concerns children living in bilingual communities where they are simultaneously or sequentially confronted with varieties of what are considered to be different languages. In the case of bilingualism involving heritage languages, children may learn a regional variety of a minority language at home, additional varieties of the same language in the community, and different varieties of the dominant or majority language. For instance, a child born in France to a Tunisian-origin family that has recently immigrated will be in contact with the variety of Arabic spoken in Tunisia within the family, with other varieties of Arabic spoken in the community and with both regional and standard varieties of French. If we add to this that children may use non-native features of the dominant language

as a discourse strategy (for example, Arabic-accented English to signal convergence with or divergence from the interlocutor, Khattab, 2013; see De Houwer, this volume, for discussion of convergence in bilingual interaction), this second type of situation highlights the fact that dialectal variation may be pervasive in children's language environments and production.

The third typical context concerns teenagers and adults learners who are in contact with different varieties of an L2. These varieties may include social and regional dialects spoken by native speakers of the L2. This configuration occurs when teenagers and adults move to a country where they start or continue to learn an L2. Migration and study abroad are two examples of this situation. However, even when learning an L2 in the classroom in their native country, learners are in contact with different varieties of this language, including the teacher's non-native variety and social and regional varieties encountered through media.

The fourth typical context results from the lifelong possibility of learning a second or a third dialect of the same language. The sequential acquisition of several dialects may occur in the case of geographical (moving to another region) or social (change in profession or in the course of study) mobility, or in more specific settings. For instance, in periods of major political change, as was the case with the fall of the Berlin wall, the opening up of borders that earlier could not be traversed have allowed speakers to be exposed to new dialects (Auer, Barden & Grosskopf, 2000).

The diversity manifested by these four typical dialect learning contexts suggests that exposure to and acquisition of several dialects is common. Whilst the first two bidialectal learning contexts involve children, the third one mainly concerns adolescents and adults. The fourth context encompasses all life stages following the primary socialization stage.

4 Young Childhood to Preadolescence

4.1 Language Attitudes in Children and Preadolescents

In this section we focus on the ways children perceive and socially categorize varieties: We consider how children develop language attitudes and to what extent adults' attitudes and ideologies exert an influence on children's attitudes and categorization of dialects. Categorization is a cognitive process that is intrinsically related to perceptions, attitudes and language ideologies. Both language attitudes and ideologies draw links between language (and dialect) structure or usage and groups as well as personal identity (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1995; see Fuller, this volume, for related discussion).

When children are confronted with a variable language environment they will develop language attitudes and ideologies concerning the varieties to which they are exposed.

Numerous studies have been designed to tap into children's attitudes towards dialects of the same language (Kinzler & DeJesus, 2013), foreign accented realizations of their home language (Floccia, Butler, Girard & Goslin, 2009) or attitudes towards the languages used in the children's environment that differ in prestige (Cremona & Bates, 1977). The adults' attitudes in these contexts provide children with cues regarding the types of uses that are perceived as appropriate. Family language practices and policies often express attitudes favoring the most prestigious language or dialect (e.g., in the European context, see Ghimenton, 2015; see Gonçalves, this volume, for discussion of family language practices and policies).

The attitudes that children develop are tightly linked to their ability to distinguish the varieties involved and to exploit indexical information that these carry. Although metacognitive skills emerge before children receive formal education (De Houwer, 2017a), the appearance of metapragmatic awareness of sociolinguistic variables in children who are exposed to very similar dialects does not seem to occur before the age of 5 to 6 (Barbu, Nardy, Chevrot & Juhel, 2013). It has been suggested that 5- to 6-year-olds have a gradient representation of dialect variation as they are able to distinguish dialects when their home variety is contrasted with another variety and not, for example, when they are presented with two unfamiliar dialect varieties (Wagner, Clopper & Pate, 2013). Kinzler and DeJesus (2013) compared attitudes towards regional accents in the United States amongst two age groups. The first comprised children aged 5 to 6; the second group consisted of children aged 9 to 10. In each age group, children either came from Illinois (where a northern, prestigious, variety of American English is spoken) or Tennessee (where a southern, less prestigious, variety of American English is spoken). They found that the younger children showed either a preference for their own dialect or no preference towards any particular dialect. For the older children though, both groups (northern and southern) viewed the northern and more prestigious variety in a more favorable light. These results suggest that children progressively align their attitudes towards dialects towards the mainstream adult preferences (Niedzielski & Preston, 2000), and build categories in function of the perceived prestige of dialectal variation (see De Vogelaer & Toye, 2017, for further discussion).

From a developmental perspective, children as young as 5 are thus able to express sociolinguistic preferences for specific dialectal varieties. As children grow older their attitudes are aligned with the adults' categorizations based on dialects' socio-indexical values, in particular when it comes to perceived prestige of one variety as opposed to another.

4.2 Production in Children and Preadolescents

In this subsection we review some factors that influence and shape children's and preadolescents' production of dialectal varieties.

Starting from 2 years of age, children produce the regional variants to which they are exposed through their caregivers' speech (Ghimenton, Chevrot & Billiez, 2013). The use of regional variants seems to peak in preadolescence and when children speak to their local friends from the same region (Barbu, Martin & Chevrot, 2014).

Studies that have explored the impact of family socioeconomic background on children's production of sociolinguistic variables tend toward the same result: The higher the family background's position on the social scale, the more standard variants children produce. This effect is both early and robust. It appears already at age 3 and seems to increase along with development. With regards to style, i.e., the ability to adapt the usage of dialectal varieties according to the social context, the results of the available studies also converge. Similarly to what has been found in adults, children select more standard variants when participating in a formal interactional context. This skill occurs at an early stage, as children are capable of selecting variants according to the type of interaction with caregivers from the age of 3 (Smith, Durham & Richards, 2013; see De Houwer, this volume, for discussion of similar interlocutor determined language use choices in bilingual children).

Labov (1990) showed that in adult populations there is a gender based difference with regard to language variation, in that women generally use more standard variants than men. For children this gender effect is not so clear. Some studies found no gender effect for the use of variants in children aged 2 to 9 (e.g., Ingram, Pittam & Newman, 1985). Others revealed that between the ages of 3 and 10, girls produce more standard variants than boys (Romaine, 1984), but then there are studies showing that it is boys rather than girls who use more standard variants (Roberts, 1997). In the rural Haute-Savoie region of France, 10- and 11-year-old boys born in the area used more regional variants than girls, but only when they were talking to long term male friends from the same area (Barbu et al., 2014).

Studies linking ethnicity and dialect acquisition have focused primarily on the acquisition of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) (e.g., Green, 2010). The acquisition of AAVE is an acquisition process *per se* rather than an imperfect attempt to acquire standard English, as some may think. Like children everywhere, children exposed to AAVE learn the specific variable cues of the language they are hearing, in this case, AAVE, from the specific input they are exposed to in their communities (see Armon-Lotem & Meir, this volume, for similar findings in early bilingualism). Although the trajectories of AAVE

usage from childhood to adolescence are diverse, just as most language development trajectories are, AAVE usage generally decreases during the early years of schooling, at which time children's usage of mainstream English increases. This crossing pattern has been attested for other standard, mainstream varieties that are acquired along with non-standard varieties (Nardy, Chevrot & Barbu, 2013), and it is reminiscent of what happens in bilingual children when a minority language is acquired alongside a majority language (see Armon-Lotem & Meir, this volume).

Few studies have examined the impact of children's social network on their usage of standard and nonstandard varieties. However, the results from the existing research point in the same direction. Like in adults and adolescents, children who are well-integrated in their peer group and who have a dense social network are the most likely to use more nonstandard variants. This effect has been found from ages 4 to 5 (Nardy, Chevrot & Barbu, 2014).

The above brief review highlights the fact that children acquire dialectal variants from early on. Moreover, sensitivity to the same factors that influence adult production of varieties appears at an early stage in children's life. The process of dialectal acquisition is not parallel or lagged behind the acquisition of one or more languages. Rather, it is an inherent part of it. However, the diverging results in studies focused on the influence of child gender on the use of dialectal varieties leads one to reconsider certain aspects in this conclusion. It is likely that the age of acquisition of sociolinguistic patterns depends on the perceptual salience of sociolinguistic variables and on their social salience within a given community. The usage of certain dialectal traits may turn out to be transmitted at an early stage in development within the family language environment, whereas others may, in contrast, be subject to a longer socialization or identity construction process.

5 Adolescence to Adulthood

5.1 Language Attitudes in Adolescents and Adults

Adolescents and adults' attitudes towards language variation have been studied mainly in the fields of folk linguistics and L2 acquisition. This large body of research reveals that adolescence generally marks a gradual alignment towards adult language attitudes.

Folk linguistics studies have tapped language attitudes by looking at how speakers index dialects and their speakers. These studies reveal that language attitudes vary along different dimensions. Niedzielski and Preston (2000) provide a comprehensive account of this type of research conducted in the United States. For example, amongst the numerous attitudes that emerge in social psychological perception studies, mainstream varieties of English

(represented by the northern American English varieties) index social mobility, whereas the southern varieties index friendliness. Language attitudes have also been investigated through anthropologically oriented ethnographic approaches. For example, fieldwork from Cavanaugh's (2013) ethnographic studies in Bergamo (Northern Italy) revealed that local speakers perceive their regional dialect as carrying traits of masculinity and low education. Similarly to what was found in Preston's work on language attitudes in the United States (e.g., Niedzielski & Preston, 2000), however, regional varieties are not systematically perceived along a negative dimension. They are also viewed as linguistic resources that can best reflect a speaker's emotional states (sentiments of affect, for example) as opposed to the stylistic options the standard offers. This echoes findings regarding the role of emotions as related to specific languages in bilinguals (e.g., Pavlenko, 2005).

Some L2 acquisition studies have found that L2 learners have a distinct preference for the standard, mainstream variety. For example, Fox and McGory (2007) showed that Japanese learners of English as an L2 exhibited negative attitudes towards southern varieties of American English and preferred the northern (mainstream) American English accent. In addition, L2 variation impacts L2 learners' attitudes and also their comprehension abilities (Gold, 2015). The perceived negative influence of dialects on comprehension notwithstanding, it has also been shown that exposure to greater dialectal variety in L2 acquisition increases learners' capacities in perceiving and producing vowels in German and French (Smith & Baker, 2011), as well as in Spanish (Schmidt, 2009).

Language attitudes reveal fragments of speaker ideologies that seem to exert a certain influence on both perception and production. The same language ideologies exist in different age groups and shape speakers' attitudes. Thus, exposure to a language means gaining an attitude towards that specific language and its different varieties. In this perspective taking process, speakers will develop implicit measures of desirability where some languages or varieties are viewed in a more favorable light than others. It is striking that findings on language attitudes in children, adolescents, adults and L2 learners point to the same direction: Levels of desirability are generally higher towards mainstream varieties. This suggests that language ideologies impact L2 learners in the same way that they do in L1 acquisition. Although expressions of language attitudes do not predict language choices in situations of language contact (Ghimenton, 2015), they allow the tapping of ideologies and categorizations that are collectively constructed (see Fuller, this volume).

5.2 Production in Adolescents and Adults

Dialectal practices learnt at an early stage in life can be modified at a later stage, during adolescence or adulthood. For example, some abilities acquired at an early age such as the ability to select variants according to the interaction setting with caregivers (e.g., teaching and play versus routine and discipline, Smith et al., 2013) could be linked to new indexical values later on, when adolescent or young adults discover the link between variants and social groups (Labov, 2013). But adolescents and adults may also learn new dialectal varieties. This appears generally in two contexts, namely the third and fourth typical contexts outlined in Section 3.

First, teen and adult learners may come into contact with different varieties of an L2, including different registers and stylistic variants. They thus have to learn the patterns of sociolinguistic variation implemented by speakers of the L2.

Numerous studies of learners of French as an L2 have tried to shed light on the influence of learners' gender on their usage of French. For example, for some variables but not all, Regan, Howard and Lemée (2009) found a tendency on the part of their female participants towards more standard, normative usage. Other studies did not find any gender difference (Dewaele, 2004). Dewaele (2002) explains the lack of gender related differences in L2 French usage between male and female learners as resulting from learners' limited knowledge of socio-indexical values. It should be highlighted that the same difficulty in observing a clear pattern between dialectal usage and gender has been found in children acquiring their first language (see Section 4.2 earlier). This convergence suggests that the construction of gendered speech is a long and winding road, in infancy as well as in adulthood.

Studies addressing the impact of learners' SES on L2 sociolinguistic usage have found that higher SES adult learners tend to use standard, normative variants of the L2 more frequently compared to lower SES speakers and to speakers who speak the L2 as a first language (Regan et al., 2009; Rehner & Mougeon, 1999). As Rehner and Mougeon (1999) have shown, L2 learners may not be able (or willing) to switch to less normatively standard, more informal variants in response to changes in the formality of the speech situation (higher SES learners even less so than lower SES learners). However, as the authors suggest, opportunities for natural interactions with L1 speakers may play a role in increasing learners' ability to flexibly adjust stylistic variants to the speech situation (see also Dewaele, 2004). Indeed, everyday interactions with native speakers are likely the key for learners to gain access to more flexible production of L2 varieties. Based on evidence collected during an

interview with the same researcher, L2 French learners in a study abroad context whose social network included native L1 speakers of the host country (France) increased the frequency of use of nonstandard variants common in informal interactions during their stay (such as the deletion of *ne* in French negatives, and the omission of standard liaison), whereas learners of French whose networks were made up of speakers of their own L1 increased the use of standard variants (Gautier & Chevrot, 2015). As Howard, Mougeon and Dewaele (2013) emphasize, the best acquisition context for informal varieties is naturalistic immersion during primary socialization, followed by naturalistic immersion in study abroad contexts. Immersion classroom contexts are less conducive to acquiring informal varieties, and least conducive are classroom contexts under drip feed, limited-input conditions. (For discussion of the latter two contexts, see Juan-Garau & Lyster, this volume, and Muñoz & Spada, this volume, respectively.)

There is more and more research about the processes of acquisition of L2 sociolinguistic patterns. As reviewed in Ortega (this volume) the evidence across several languages suggests that study abroad fosters quite a bit of awareness of the indexical meanings of different L2 varieties, the learning of L2 variable features, and the development of either negative or positive social attitudes (however, this body of research is still smaller than the research on the acquisition of L1 sociolinguistic variation). There also is relevant research on entirely different populations such as migrants who are in everyday contact with dialectal varieties of the language of the host country that they did not know prior to immigration. Extensive L2 exposure and the diversity of social settings experienced by Polish-born migrant teenagers in London would explain them acquiring the linguistic constraints of a phonetic variable such as /t/ glottaling after only two years in England, and being able to use the variable as a stylistic resource within the same period (Schleef, 2017). But even after decades of residence in Switzerland, Canadian and English migrants still exhibit different patterns of use of standard German and non-standard Swiss Alemannic dialects that can be explained through their social experiences, their social expectations about the host community, and the linguistic complexity of the variants (Ender, 2017).

The diversity of contexts of acquisition, the description of input, and issues related to identity are among the numerous areas to be explored to better understand the acquisition of sociolinguistic variation in an L2. This exploration should also consider how learners transfer sociolinguistic patterns acquired in their first language. Finally, an important issue concerns the extent to which the categories of sociolinguistic perception and their socio-indexical

values (e.g., masculinity, educated, sociability) are the same across different languages and cultures.

Finally, we turn to second dialect acquisition, that is, on the acquisition of new dialects of the same language. The field of second dialect acquisition is developing rapidly and is becoming an independent area of research that contributes to major theoretical debates in the language sciences (Nycz, 2013). Our discussion here focuses on adults and adolescents, even if second dialect acquisition concerns children too and has important educational implications. Children who master nonstandard varieties find themselves at a disadvantage in schools where the standard variety is promoted (for related discussion of children acquiring different languages, see García & Tupas, this volume).

Based on comparisons of the acquisition of different languages and the acquisition of different dialects of the same language Siegel (2010) set out clear milestones for second dialect acquisition. Noting that second dialect learners did not have much success, Siegel explores the reasons why the acquisition of a second dialect is difficult compared to the acquisition of an L2. The specificity of second dialect acquisition is the great systemic proximity between dialect 1 (D1) and dialect 2 (D2). When they start to learn a second dialect, learners already know the linguistic units and constructions that form the basis of the variety. Given this structural proximity, they struggle to distinguish the two systems and to notice the differences separating them. Consequently, transfers from one dialect to another are numerous. They are even more frequent if the two varieties are perceived as similar (regardless of their structural distance as determined by linguists).

Given that often D1 speakers understand D2 speakers, one may wonder why it is necessary to acquire a D2. A D2 is often acquired due to “the desire to be a part of the new community and be viewed as a local” (Siegel, 2010, p. 138). Thus, D2 acquirers target social goals which go beyond the ability to communicate. Since dialects are bound with specific identities (e.g., region, class, ethnicity, gender), trying to speak another dialect than our own may trigger negative reactions from speakers of the D2 as well as from speakers of the D1. Some reasons for those negative attitudes include misinterpretation of a learner's attempt to speak the D2 (e.g., it could be interpreted as making fun of it), folk essentializations of identity and authentic self, and feelings that a dialect belongs to a specific community. Siegel sheds light on the different factors that influence the acquisition of an L2 and the acquisition of a second dialect, such as age of acquisition and age of arrival in the area where the new variety is spoken. A close examination of the available studies emphasized two trends. First, the optimal age for acquiring a second dialect is the mid-teens or younger for the lexicon and

morphology and 7 years and under for phonology. Second, critical factors accounting for differences in second dialect achievement are age, social interaction and how the learner identifies with the host community.

6 Conclusion

Languages are not stable systems: Variation is an inherent property of their structure and their usage. A conception of the language environment inspired by sociolinguistic research would consider that, from the very beginning of and throughout their lives, children and adults are confronted with variation, whether they grow up in a monolingual, a bidialectal or a bilingual environment. From an early age, learners encounter various linguistic forms that compete for the same referential meaning but different socio-indexical values. Models of bilingual development that have attempted to show the gradual strengthening of form and function pairings within each language, that is, their internal resonance (e.g., Hernandez, Li & MacWhinney, 2005) are thus applicable to bidialectal contexts too. Modeling the emergence of bidialectal abilities is possible on the basis of the similarities in the processes involved in learning two languages or two dialects. Hence, if two varieties are acquired early, learners have every opportunity to rapidly develop processes of internal resonance linking together units and constructions specific to each language variety. If one variety is learnt earlier than another, then its forms will be more entrenched than those of a second variety learnt at a later stage. Consequently, the forms of the variety learnt first may inhibit the forms of the second variety. Should two varieties be learnt at a later stage, as in the case of the acquisition of dialects of a second language, the variety learnt first may compromise the process of internal resonance of these varieties. Processes involved in acquiring dialectal variation in a second language and acquiring a second dialect of the same language are two faces of the same coin: Both processes involve achieving social goals and adapting social identity to a new context. Interaction with native speakers of the L2 or the D2 is a strong factor that helps to achieve these goals. The interdisciplinary encounter between dialectal acquisition and the broader field of language acquisition has an important heuristic value (Ortega, 2013), fertilizing via sociolinguistic issues a field that is predominantly explored within a psycholinguistic tradition. The study of dialect acquisition shows up a major gap in traditional psycholinguistic approaches to language acquisition. That is, there is a general lack of consideration of socio-indexical information in models of language learning and processing. Yet, as has been reported in this chapter, for children, adolescents and adults alike, such information plays an essential role in both attitude formation and production.

Socio-indexical information can either reinforce or constrain internal resonance of a dialect (or a language). Working towards an integrated model including bilingual and bidialectal contexts will only be possible if both sociolinguistic research and studies concerning bilingual first and second language acquisition are brought together.

Taking an even more global and encompassing view of language learning and processing, one could see monolingualism, bidialectalism and bilingualism as being on the same continuum but with differing levels of differentiation in the linguistic usages speakers are exposed to. As mentioned earlier, both children and adults are confronted with heterogeneous language environments. Although there is a consensus regarding the inherent heterogeneity of language, a more complex issue is to decide whether for each specific sociolinguistic setting this heterogeneity results from the contact between several languages, from the contact between several dialects or varieties of the same language, or from variations within a single linguistic system. The solution to this problematic issue does not only depend on linguistic criteria concerning systemic distance or intercomprehension, but also on different ideological stances. Gaining the status of variety, dialect or language for a set of more or less convergent linguistic usages depends on their social recognition. If one were to reserve the term *dialect* or *variety* for the configurations of usages in relation to specific groups of speakers, for instance, those from a particular region or from a particular ethnic group, then bidialectal acquisition would only concern certain groups of children and adults. If, on the contrary, one agrees to designate as *dialect* or *variety* all convergences in linguistic uses noticeable within a social group (e.g., upper class dialect) or within a context (e.g., informal variety), then bidialectal acquisition would be the norm and not the exception. Children or adults who acquire a language receive exposure to concrete samples of speech, produced in diverse, socially situated contexts by actual speakers, representing diverse social groups based on gender, age, SES, etc. If we accept the broad definition of *dialect* or *variety*, the acquisition of one or more languages is systematically achieved through the contact with different varieties of these languages.

No matter what definition is adopted, an adult or a child learner should acquire the ability to move from one style to another, from one variety to another, from one language to another, according to similar social constraints. Because this ability to handle variation is profoundly rooted both in language and social cognition, the study of its acquisition throughout life is particularly promising for revealing the depth of the relations between knowledge of language and knowledge of the social world.

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