

ECDA7012: Guidance Notes for the Assignment

The Guidance Booklet for module ECDA7012: *Bilingualism and Multilingualism in the Individual* analyses the various components and issues which need to be considered when assessing bilingual *proficiency in an individual*. It will therefore be realized, as one proceeds through the Guidance Booklet, that such an analysis becomes increasingly complicated, starting with the often-oversimplified *minimalist* definitions of what it means to be ‘bilingual’ and ending with the eventual consideration of highly complicated theories of communication proficiency such as the Accommodation Theory of Sachdev & Giles (2006) (see Reading 5).

Your discussion should therefore reflect the fact that proving an individual to be *equally balanced* (not simply highly proficient) *in both languages* becomes increasingly difficult and should also illustrate the complicated nature of the topic. The fact that you continue to introduce ever-increasing issues or impediments (like having to jump over more and more hurdles in a race) to *try to* enforce the improbability of being *equally balanced* will strengthen your argument.

There are, therefore, a wide range of issues to be covered including the following:

- the discrepancy between *minimalist* and *maximalist* definitions, as in public perception of the ‘bilingual’ person;
- the four basic skills which can be divided in two ways;
- the further subdivision of those four basic skills;
- the two broad paradigms which Mackey (1962) refers to as degree (ability) and function (use);
- domains of use and how linguistic proficiency can vary from domain to domain;
- levels of language ability and skill:
- BICS and CALP;
- how the **context of use** can assist language use and communicational ability by making it *context embedded* or *context-reduced*;
- whether or not language ability in both languages involves any code-mixing or code-switching;
- *interference* in either direction, especially that of the L1 (mother tongue) in the use of the second language (L2):

Such interference can, therefore, be:

- **lexical:** involving code-mixing and/or code-switching (although the latter can also be used *deliberately*, for rhetorical reasons for example (see Baker, 2017);
- **syntactical:** as in the effect of *grammatical* aspects of one language on the other;
- **phonological:** as in one's accent, but, arguably of debatable validity;
- **prosodical:** also a debatable criterion with regard to linguistic *proficiency*.
- whether or not such interference is possibly a temporary issue in language development, as demonstrated in the form of *interlanguage*, or can eventually become a permanent (fossilized) linguistic characteristic (see Dodson, 1995 in Reading 3).

Further issues involve methods adopted in the *measurement* of bilingual proficiency (see, for example, Reading 3). However, there is a fundamental difference between *ability and use* (degree and function) so that the assessment of *overall* proficiency must, therefore, involve wider issues which are incorporated in Bachman's (1990) Model of Language Competence, (also Bachman & Palmer, 1996), (see Baker, 2011, 14-15).

Bachman's model incorporates four components which reflect the two basic paradigms of degree (ability) and function (use) introduced by Mackey (1962) (as mentioned earlier) and includes *sociolinguistic* aspects of communication which involve the assessment of linguistic proficiency not only *within the individual* (personal proficiency which can be illustrated by 'paper and pencil' language exercises) but also *in one's communication with others*.

This aspect is further developed by Sachdev & Giles (2006) in Reading 5 in terms of *accommodation theory*; therefore, there is a need to assess one's skills in communicating **with others** by considering interpersonal dynamics and issues such as *convergence* and *divergence*.

In moving from the initial to the final stages of one's argument therefore, the uninitiated reader of your assignment will have come to realize that proving an individual to be a totally *balanced* bilingual becomes increasingly difficult when more and more complicated variables are introduced into the linguistic equation.

Your assignment will therefore be based on a "simplistic-to-highly complicated" continuum.