

Self-determination and bilingualism

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on additive bilingualism for minority group children, more specifically the development of strong literacy skills in English and in the children's language. The personal autonomization language learning (PALL) model is presented. It specifies eight testable hypotheses. Self-determination theory (SDT) is central in the PALL model. It is argued that autonomy support in both languages is related to basic needs satisfaction (autonomy, competence, relatedness: ACR) which is in turn related to internally regulated motivation for learning the language. Owing to the strong social attraction of English, the model proposes that favouring the learning of the minority language and basic needs satisfaction in that language foster additive bilingualism because of the strong interlinguistic transfer of minority language competencies and of an internal motivational orientation. Self-determination to learn the minority language and minority literacy skills seems to transfer across languages. Research results support the model; these are summarized and educational implications are discussed.

KEYWORDS *additive bilingualism, biliteracy, language motivation, minority education, self-determination theory*

MOST OFTEN, INTERGROUP LINGUISTIC CONTACTS OF MINORITY GROUP MEMBERS will be with the language of a dominant majority group. Typically, these contacts favour bilingual development amongst the minority group

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members but rarely amongst the dominant group members (Hamers and Blanc, 2000). The minority language is most often in a diglossic relationship with the dominant language (Fishman, 1967), i.e. the minority language is the language of 'solidarity' used for intragroup informal contacts and the dominant language is the 'status language', prevailing in intergroup contacts, in formal and societal functions and as the medium of social mobility (Landry et al., 2007a).

However, linguistic minorities may experience intergroup contacts under different conditions of ethnolinguistic vitality (EV: Giles et al., 1977). The EV framework proposes that linguistic minorities are 'distinct and active entities' in intergroup contacts when various demographic, institutional, and status factors favour their vitality.

The type of bilingualism that minority group members develop is related to the group's EV (Lambert, 1975). In low EV contexts, bilingualism tends to be 'subtractive'; frequent contacts with the dominant language often lead to the weakening or loss of the minority language and culture. In contrast, when dominant language group speakers have frequent contacts with a language that has a low EV, bilingualism is 'additive'; competence in the dominant language is not threatened.

In this article we analyze and discuss conditions that favour the development of an 'additive' type of bilingualism for minority group members. We will focus on bilingual linguistic competencies. In the United States of America and Canada, most linguistic minorities need to learn English, the 'status' language that leads to social mobility and societal integration. How could Spanish speakers in the United States or Francophones in English Canada (i.e. outside Quebec) develop strong competencies in English and simultaneously develop and maintain strong competencies in the minority language? In the next section, we present a conceptual framework that defines conditions of additive bilingualism in minority contexts. Based on the EV framework and on self-determination theory (SDT: Deci and Ryan, 2002), several hypotheses were derived from a proposed theoretical model. We discuss these hypotheses and conclude by discussing implications for educational practice.

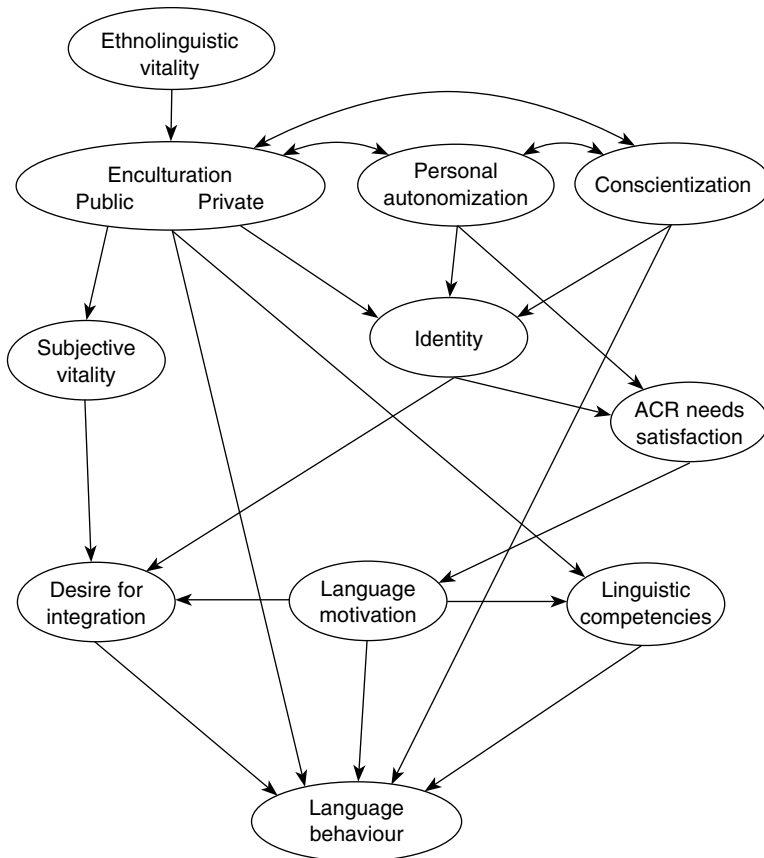
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

It has been argued that additive bilingual development in minority groups is best fostered by strong emphasis on the learning of the minority language (Cummins, 1981; Hamers and Blanc, 2000). For cognitive-academic linguistic proficiency (CALP), i.e. literacy skills, it is hypothesized that skills learned in one language are transferred across languages. This is the *linguistic interdependence hypothesis* (Cummins, 1979). Moreover, because strong social

pressures favour the learning of the dominant language, additive bilingualism is best fostered when special conditions protect and promote the low EV language (Cummins, 1981). Minority Francophone students in Canada taught completely in French except for English attain a high degree of English–French bilingualism (Landry et al., 2007b). Their English CALP skills are as high as those of Francophones taught completely in English, often equal to English unilingual norms, and their French skills are much higher than those of students with less French schooling.

To study conditions that favour the maintenance of the minority language and a high mastery of the dominant group’s language, the self-determination and ethnolinguistic development (SED) model was developed (Landry et al., 2007a). According to this model (see Figure 1) three aspects of language socialization in the minority language favour minority language development and

FIGURE 1 *The self-determination and ethnolinguistic development (SED) model (adapted from Landry et al., 2007a)*



additive bilingualism. Enculturation encompasses the quantity of linguistic contacts in each language in both the private and public domains. Contacts in the private domain tend to favour ethnolinguistic identity whereas contacts in the public domain favour the development of subjective ethnolinguistic vitality, i.e. perceptions of the vitality and status of the language in society. Subjective vitality and the strength of the person's group identity are related to the individual's desire to integrate into the linguistic community.

Personal autonomization is the degree of autonomy support that the individual receives during contacts with members of linguistic groups and through language learning experiences. Based on SDT, it is hypothesized that language learning experiences fostering autonomy (e.g. given choices of activities, valuing of one's initiatives), competence (optimal challenges and positive feedback) and relatedness (being valued and accepted) should contribute to ACR needs satisfaction and promote a self-determined motivational orientation toward the learning and use of the language. In other words, the more the quality of language socialization leads to ACR needs satisfaction, the more language behaviours will be self-determined, i.e. regulated by internal 'identified' and 'integrated' motives rather than by more external instrumental reasons, and the less the behaviours will be non self-regulated or amotivated (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Very little language-related research has been done using the SDT framework. However, Noels et al. (2000) have shown that a self-determined motivational orientation is positively related to second language learning by majority group students. It has also been shown that autonomy-supportive socialization experiences favour more integrative reasons for language learning (Deveau et al., 2006; Noels, 2005).

The third aspect of language socialization that fosters minority language maintenance and additive bilingualism is conscientization. Based on Freire's work (1970) on social conscientization and on models of critical pedagogy (Cummins, 2000; Ferrer and Allard, 2002), the SED model proposes that group members' direct and vicarious experiences (observation of social models) may favour the development of a 'critical consciousness' of factors related to their minority status and to potential societal change that could enhance their commitment and community involvement (Allard et al., 2005).

Linguistic competencies, especially oral communicative skills (Cummins, 1981), are hypothesized to be related to enculturation experiences in each language. However, as already stated, strong interlanguage transfer is expected between CALP skills in both languages. Because social pressures and societal experiences mostly favour the learning of the dominant language, it is hypothesized that additive bilingualism is better fostered when emphasis is on the learning of the low EV language, since linguistic transfer will be facilitated by

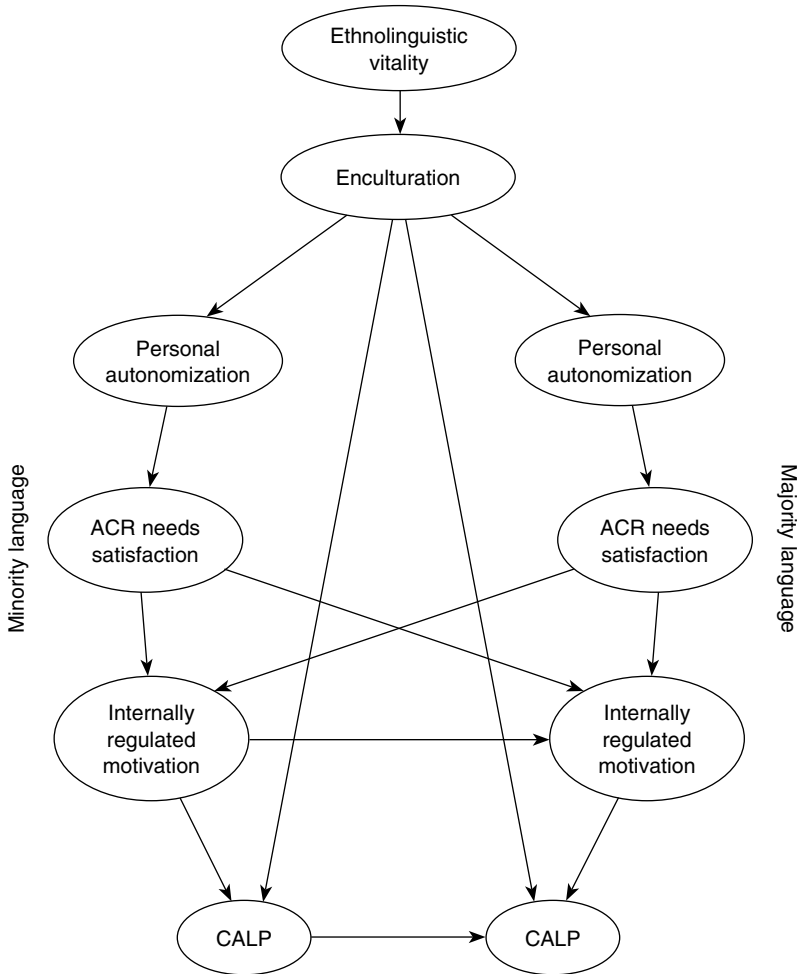
the frequent opportunities to learn and use the dominant language in society and as a second language in school.

From the SDT perspective, it can be hypothesized that internally regulated motivation will be related to language competencies in both languages. Since self-regulation in a behavioural domain is expected to be related to other behaviours in similar domains (Vallerand and Ratelle, 2002), it can also be hypothesized that self-determination dispositions in one language will transfer to the learning dispositions in the other language. To our knowledge, no SDT research has tested this hypothesis. Consonant with the principle that emphasis on the low EV language better fosters additive bilingualism because it counterbalances the prevailing societal conditions which strongly promote the learning of the high-status language, additive bilingualism should be best fostered when personal autonomization is strong in the low EV language. Indeed, strong personal autonomization in the dominant language without such autonomy support in the minority language would foster subtractive bilingualism and linguistic assimilation since there is little societal pressure or social incentive to learn the low EV language.

We now focus on the following components of the SED model: the EV of the language groups, enculturation experiences, personal autonomization, ACR needs satisfaction, language motivation and linguistic competencies (i.e. biliteracy or CALP skills). All model components can be measured in both minority (French or Spanish, for example) and dominant (English) languages. Based on the EV and the SDT frameworks as well as on the SED model, the following eight hypotheses were derived and are illustrated in the personal autonomization language learning (PALL) model (Figure 2).

- 1 High minority group EV is related to stronger enculturation in the minority language; conversely, low EV is related to stronger enculturation in the majority language.
- 2 The degree of enculturation in a language is related to the degree of personal autonomization in that language (i.e. bilingual enculturation can be related to personal autonomization in both languages).
- 3 Personal autonomization (or basic needs support) in a language is related to ACR needs satisfaction in that language.
- 4 Need satisfaction in the language of 'solidarity' (minority) is related to internally regulated motivation to learn and use that language and to externally regulated motivation for the 'status' language. Inversely, strong ACR needs satisfaction in the majority language will be related to internally regulated motivation to learn that language and to externally regulated motivation for learning and using the minority language (only weakly, however, because of low social attraction to the low-vitality language).

FIGURE 2 *The personal autonomization language learning (PALL) model*



- 5 Internally regulated motivation to learn and use a language is positively related to cognitive-academic linguistic competencies (CALP) in that language.
- 6 Enculturation experiences in a language will be related to CALP in that language.
- 7 CALP in one language will be positively related to similar competencies in the other language (the linguistic interdependence hypothesis).
- 8 Internally regulated (i.e. self-determined) motivation to learn and use the minority language will be positively related to internally regulated motivation to learn and use the dominant language.

A recent study in Atlantic Canada involving minority francophone students (Landry et al., 2007c) has shown strong support for the PALL model's hypotheses, which were verified by structural equation modeling. Students residing in higher French EV municipalities had stronger enculturation in French and lower enculturation in English. The inverse was found for students in lower French EV communities. The degree of enculturation in French was positively related to the degree of personal autonomization in that language; the same was found for the degree of enculturation in English. In other words, bilingual enculturation was positively related to basic needs support in both languages. Moreover, personal autonomization was positively related to ACR needs satisfaction in each of the languages, their satisfaction being, in turn, related to internally regulated motivation to learn and use these languages. Francophone students who were strongly internally motivated to learn one of the languages were more externally motivated to learn the other language. This relationship was much stronger, however, when internal motivation was stronger in the minority language. In a minority context, as hypothesized, learning one's language for identity (integrated) reasons does not lead to less motivation to learn the dominant language because one still tends to be motivated to learn this high-status language for social mobility or instrumental reasons. The inverse tends to be much less likely and increases the risk of subtractive bilingualism. As hypothesized by the PALL model, students who were internally motivated to learn the minority language were also more self-determined in their motivation to learn and use the majority language (hypothesis 8) and their scores on the French CALP test were strongly and positively related to their scores on the English CALP test, thus strongly supporting the linguistic interdependence hypothesis. Enculturation experiences in English in their bilingual community were also positively related to their English CALP scores, supporting the hypothesis that social incentives to learn English contribute to the learning of that language. The degree of French enculturation outside of the school, however, was not significantly related to the French CALP scores. These results support previous findings which show that it is the degree of schooling in the minority language that is the stronger predictor of CALP scores in the minority language (Landry and Allard, 1993, Landry et al., 2007b).

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The PALL model needs to be tested in different bilingual contexts before definite educational implications can be derived. However, in Canadian francophone communities outside Quebec, which tend to have low EV, teaching in French in schools controlled by the minority community has had

very positive consequences for the promotion of additive bilingualism even if many challenges in the fight against linguistic assimilation remain (Landry et al., 2007b). Political ideologies in the United States have been much less supportive of strong bilingual programs for the teaching of Spanish than those in Canada have been for the teaching of French (Bourhis and Marshall, 1999). The strongest bilingual programs in the United States provide for very little minority group autonomy, the best programs being those called 'dual immersion', i.e. classrooms comprising English and Hispanic students who are taught in English and in Spanish in the same classroom, mainly at the elementary school level (see Baker, 2006, for a review and discussion of various bilingual programs in the United States and elsewhere). Critiques in the United States against bilingual programs that promote a high degree of teaching in the minority language have tended not to be grounded in language theories (Cummins, 1999) and have relied mostly on pedagogical techniques that do not sufficiently consider the language contexts outside of the school and the relative vitality of the language communities in contact (Landry and Allard, 1993). Our discussion of the educational implications of the PALL model does not analyze these ideological and structural distinctions between school contexts in Canada and the United States, but they would certainly need to be addressed if implementation procedures were to be elaborated.

The implications of the PALL model are based on one major principle. Additive bilingualism in low EV contexts is best promoted and fostered when priority is given to the teaching and learning of the low-vitality language (Landry et al., 2007b). Each context has to be analyzed, however. For example, minority students living in a context where the low-status language group is territorially concentrated and isolated from the majority group may experience very little contact with the majority language and may have little knowledge of it at the beginning of their schooling. In other neighbourhoods, where the minority group is not densely concentrated and where many students may live in exogamous families (one parent from the minority, the other from the majority), the students may enter school already dominant in the majority language. If additive bilingualism is the goal, however, and if one takes into consideration that contacts with the majority language will increase as the children get older (through contacts with the media, the expansion of their social network and more frequent contacts with public institutions), the PALL model predicts that additive bilingualism (high levels of skills in both languages) is best fostered if the teaching of all subject matters begins in the minority language, is maintained throughout secondary schooling and if English is taught at a very high level, i.e. at the

same level as if the students were native speakers of English. Such a schooling model is now commonplace with minority francophones in Canada and it gives good results. The major problem is that, despite such a high degree of schooling in French, most of the students still perform better in English than in French. However, they do attain a high degree of bilingualism, their English skills are often at par with those of Anglophone students in English schools, and their French skills remain much higher than those of francophone students taught mostly or entirely in English. Applying such a schooling model in the United States would certainly require many changes in the language and political ideologies that are now prevalent. Nonetheless, adaptations of this model to the educational context of the United States (perhaps based on the dual immersion approach) could still promote additive bilingualism for both minority and majority group members. In Canada, additive bilingualism of majority group members has been promoted mainly through French immersion programs (Genesee, 1998).

What self-determination theory has added to the bilingual theories that define conditions favouring additive bilingualism is the hypothesis that language learning is fostered by language socialization or learning experiences that support the satisfaction of the basic needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness. Personal autonomization seems especially important for the development of an internally regulated motivational disposition for learning and using a language. Furthermore, and consonant with the linguistic interdependence hypothesis, this self-determined disposition in the learning and use of the minority language seems to transfer to the learning and use of the dominant language. More research is needed to test this hypothesis. If the hypothesis is confirmed in various minority contexts, proponents of bilingual education may have a new theoretical tool to help minority group members maintain their language and culture and integrate in wider society as autonomous and competent bilingual or multilingual individuals.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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