Introduction

Looking back over my career, I realize, sometimes with a tinge of incredulity, that I have been active in bilingualism research for more than fifty years. This resulted in articles, chapters, and books, the cofounding of a new academic journal, a general public blog, lectures and conferences, and interactions of different types. Just in the domain of books, I have written, among others, a textbook,[1] two monographs for a general public,[2] a collection of essays,[3] a compilation of blog posts,[4] and two primers,[5] one with Ping Li, and the other with Krista Byers-Heinlein.

All these books, which reported primarily on the research and thinking of numerous colleagues, past and present, probably would not have been possible had I not been myself a researcher in the field. My name is attached to a number of theories, concepts, and research findings, which colleagues kindly refer to in their own work. An example that comes to mind is my holistic view of bilingualism. The subtitle of a 1989 paper, "The Bilingual Is Not Two Monolinguals in One Person," has circulated extensively, and many colleagues have adopted the view's theoretical underpinnings. There are other examples, such as my work on language mode, the Complementarity Principle, spoken language processing, biculturalism, the bilingualism and biculturalism of the Deaf, the statistics of bilingualism, and so on.

It is with this in mind that I thought that a book on my own scientific contributions over the years might of be of interest. Two other books of mine might be seen to cover this ground but, upon reflection, they do not. The first is my 2019 autobiography,[6] in which I mention some of my contributions but do

[1] *Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism* (Harvard University Press, 1982).
[2] *Bilingual: Life and Reality* (Harvard University Press, 2010) and *Parler plusieurs langues: le monde des bilingues* (Albin Michel, 2015).
[3] *The Mysteries of Bilingualism: Unresolved Issues* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2022).
[4] *Life as a Bilingual* (Cambridge University Press, 2021).
[5] *The Psycholinguistics of Bilingualism* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013; with Ping Li); and *The Listening Bilingual* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2018; with Krista Byers-Heinlein).
[6] *A Journey in Languages and Cultures: The Life of a Bicultural Bilingual* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

so briefly and in simple terms for the general public. The coverage I was thinking of would be much more comprehensive and academic, and would be aimed mainly at those involved in the study of bilinguals and bilingualism. The second book is a collection of my writings up to 2008,[7] but in it I rarely step back from the research itself. What was missing, I thought, was a work where I present my contributions in a coherent way. It would be a reflection of what I have attempted to bring to the field, keeping in mind where it stood at the start of my career, and where it stands now. I approached Cambridge University Press with a proposal and after the usual review process, they kindly accepted it.

The first chapter of this book sets the stage. In it I explain how my interest in bilinguals and bilingualism began with my own childhood bilingualism. During my younger years, I often reflected on what it means to know and use two or more languages in everyday life. This led to a Master's thesis on the topic at the Sorbonne and then, a few years later, to a large survey of the field for my first book, *Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism*. I am convinced that this mixture of personal experience, initial research, and overview of the field helped me in my subsequent research on bilingualism.

The nine chapters that follow take up the issues that I have worked on over the years. I deal with my holistic view of bilingualism, the bilingual's language modes, the Complementarity Principle, spoken language processing, cross-linguistic influence, biculturalism, the bilingualism and biculturalism of the Deaf, the statistics of bilingualism, and special bilinguals. In each chapter, with the exception of the last one, I refer briefly to the literature that I found when I started, I describe the concept, theory, or findings that I proposed, I add some follow-up comments when appropriate, and give some reactions from colleagues, as well as describe replications and extensions when the work was experimental. Hopefully, with each chapter, the reader will have a good grasp of the issue as I presented it and of how it has weathered with time since it was first proposed.

The last chapter, like the first, is slightly different. Since bilingualism and biculturalism are so widespread, and have important social consequences, I have communicated about them to the general public, and to parents and professionals involved with bilingual children and adolescents. In this chapter, I refer to the books, articles, and interviews done specifically for them; I relate how I blogged about bilingualism on the *Psychology Today* website for some ten years; and I defend the position that has been mine on the right of the deaf child to grow up bilingual.

Even though the issues I raise are of substance, I have tried to avoid too much terminology and when I do use the latter, as is inevitable, I define my

[7] *Studying Bilinguals* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

terms and explain the concepts. This book can therefore also be used for courses in psycholinguistics, linguistics, cognitive sciences, speech and language pathology, bilingualism, applied linguistics, and first- and second-language acquisition. It is suitable for upper level BA and BS courses, as well as graduate studies.

As I end this short introduction, my thoughts go to the coauthors of the books, chapters, and papers we have collaborated on, and to Master and PhD students who undertook various research projects under my guidance on issues and concepts I proposed. I mention some of their work here and wish to express my gratitude to them.

I have interacted with a few colleagues while preparing this book and wish to thank them. Aneta Pavlenko very kindly read a couple of chapters, and a number of colleagues interacted with me concerning the current status of bilingualism in the Deaf Community: Penny Boyes Braem, Patti Jones, Marc Marschark, Esperanza Morales-López, and Elena Radustsky. May they all be thanked.

Finally, I wish to express my gratefulness to those at Cambridge University Press who believed in this book from the outset: Helen Barton, the Senior Commissioning Editor for Language and Linguistics, who has seen this book through the stages of evaluation, preparation, and production; Isabel Collins, her editorial assistant; Sari Wastell, the content manager; Hemalatha Subramanian, the project manager; Joseph Shaw, the copy editor; and Katie Collins, the graphic artist, as well as Mia.

1 The Setting

Academics first become interested in a research field in different ways – some by following a course at university, others through listening and talking to motivating speakers, others by events they have lived through, and some simply by accident. What triggered my interest in bilinguals and bilingualism was my own bilingualism. I became bilingual in French and English in my youth and often reflected on what it means to use two or more languages in everyday life. This led me to do a Master's thesis on the topic at the Sorbonne, and then, a few years later, to survey the field for my first book on bilingualism. It was during this last stage that I met Einar Haugen, an esteemed scholar of bilingualism who befriended me and encouraged me to undertake research in this field. In what follows, I will describe these events, which were to influence my own work over the years.

1.1 Becoming Bilingual

In *A Journey in Languages and Cultures: The Life of a Bicultural Bilingual* (Grosjean, 2019), I relate how I had started my life as a monolingual, much to the surprise of my interlocutors, who expect me to have been a simultaneous bilingual. After all, wasn't my father French and my mother English, and didn't each speak their native language to me from birth? It didn't happen that way in my case for at least two reasons. First, the one person–one language approach requires some organization and discipline, and neither of my parents seemed interested in pursuing it. They no longer got along and actually separated when I was one year old. Second, consciously raising a child bilingual at the time was not something one did as frequently as now. In fact, back then, bilingualism in children was often perceived negatively. As the educator and linguist Simon S. Laurie (1890) had stated: "If it were possible for a child or boy to live in two languages at once equally well, so much the worse. His intellectual and spiritual growth would not thereby be doubled but halved" (pp. 15–16). And so I started my life as a monolingual.

My mother obtained custody of my sister and me, and she put us in foster homes very early on. The one I remember well was in Villiers-Adam, a small village north-west of Paris, where Madame Wallard looked after several children in a totally French environment. I spent some five years there. When my parents came to visit, separately of course, they would speak French to us. My sister only remained a few years, and I was the only one who started school there at age six. During that time, I do not remember hearing any language other than French being spoken around me. Several months before my eighth birthday, my mother removed me from Madame Wallard's care and took me to Switzerland to a *home d'enfants*, a preschool boarding school. It was located in Chesières, a little village in the French-speaking part of the country, where my everyday life was not really very different from that in Villiers-Adam. It is there that I was reunited with my sister.

Our first contact with English came a few months later when we were given weekly English lessons by a rather elderly man as our mother had decided to put us into local English boarding schools after the summer. He only concentrated on oral language such as greetings, giving the time, saying simple things, and so on, and everything went quite smoothly. Things speeded up at the end of the summer when someone came to transfer me to Aiglon College, an English school in the next village, Villars. In the space of a few hours, I left my monolingual French world to enter an English-speaking world that was new to me. I was eight and a half at the time.

Even though I was dropped into a totally different language environment, everything took place smoothly. Many of the staff and some of the children knew some French and acted as translators when need be. In addition, some of the personnel were Swiss French and the surrounding community was French-speaking. I slipped into English without any trouble, and it rapidly became my dominant language. Since the other boys came from Great Britain and the United States, I also acculturated into their cultures without any effort.

As this was taking place, I slowly lost my French. The more my English improved, the more my French declined and fossilized. Not my simple conversational French, spoken without any accent, but my written, more formal French. In addition, because I sometimes went down to Italy to see my mother, and passed most of my time with the grooms on her horse farm, I started to acquire Italian. None of them spoke my two languages, and so the need for Italian, and the fact there were other children there, allowed me to acquire it quickly. I never learned to read or write the language but, in the end, I did speak it quite fluently.

At age fourteen, my mother moved me to a public school in England, and for the next four years I was in a totally British environment. My written

English improved greatly, to the point that in my last year there, I won the English prize. Within a strict British public school mold there was little room for my French side, and so it was reduced even more. I did have to take French classes though and realized that I was not as good as some of my classmates in grammar and translation. In many ways, I resembled the heritage language teenagers, as they are known today, in countries like the United States.

At age eighteen, I left my school in England and started university in Paris. In the span of one day – the time it took to go from England to France at that time – my need for each of my two languages changed completely. French became my most needed language after having been dormant for ten years. Most of my language domains had been covered by English exclusively, but quite suddenly I had to use French in many of them. It was substantially restricted in terms of lexical and grammatical knowledge, as well as language repertoires. It became my everyday language, though, and over the years my language dominance started changing again. This was certainly the case for my speaking skills, as I did not use English much. My written English did not suffer too much though, and I actually wrote my PhD thesis in it several years later. I also learned some Spanish – we had to have a second foreign language at university – but I never became very good at it.

After ten years in France, my wife, our young son, and I moved to the United States where we lived for twelve years. English became once again my dominant language and French dropped in fluency and use. It is at that time that I learned American Sign Language (ASL) and did research on it, but there too I never became very fluent[1] in it, much to my regret. By the time I wrote *Life with Two Languages* (Grosjean, 1982), eight years after having arrived, I still used my first language with my wife but did practically everything else in English, like innumerable first-generation immigrants.

In 1986, we moved back to Europe for good and settled in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. So, once again, my languages reorganized themselves. We became a French- and English-speaking family – our two English-speaking sons quickly acquired French – and I worked with both languages. As I write this many years later, things have stayed the same, although I have regrettably lost my ASL and Italian

My life with languages, presented by the means of grids in Chapter 2 (Figure 2.2), helped set the stage for my work on bilingualism. But what was missing was a hands-on project on the topic, as well as a thorough survey of the field. I will now cover these two other aspects.

[1] The reader will notice that I have moved from using "fluent" / "fluency" to "proficient" / "proficiency" as the years have gone by. I have used both pairs to refer to a person's competence in a language, but since the former have a second meaning (that of expressing oneself easily and smoothly), I preferred to use the latter in my later writings.

1.2 A Master's Thesis on Bilingualism

After my "licence" (Bachelor) at the Sorbonne, obtained in 1967, I teamed up with Dounia Fourescot-Barnett to undertake a joint Master's thesis with her (Grosjean and Fourescot-Barnett, 1968). I told her I wanted to work on bilingualism in order to find out about the topic and, indirectly, better understand what I was going through linguistically. She agreed as she too lived in a bilingual environment – her husband was British – and she knew a number of English–French bilinguals we could interview for our study.

When I did the literature search for our team, I discovered Uriel Weinreich's (1966) *Languages in Contact*, Einar Haugen's (1969) *The Norwegian Language in America: A Study in Bilingual Behavior*,[2] as well as the work of several eminent researchers at the time such as Wallace Lambert, William Mackey, and Andrée Tabouret-Keller. Several aspects of bilingualism research marked me then. The first was that the terms "bilingual" and "bilingualism" were still primarily defined in terms of language knowledge. For example, Hall (1952) stated that bilingualism was the "effective command of two or more linguistic systems." Vogt (1954) was less adamant but still put forward proficiency as the main factor. He stated that bilingualism covered all degrees from total mastery to the most rudimentary knowledge of a language other than one's own. Weinreich's (1966) proposal to stress language use – bilingualism is the practice of alternatively using two languages – was still relatively new at the time. A second aspect was that interference[3] was seen as the major trace of intermingling languages. Few researchers at the time made a clear distinction between interferences – deviations from the language being written or spoken stemming from the influence of the other language – and mixed language behavior in the presence of other bilinguals like code-switching and borrowing. And a third aspect that was prevalent pertained to the problems that characterized bilinguals and bilingualism, such as having to keep the two languages separate, feeling different and unsure of oneself, having difficulties integrating into a cultural group, needing to speak the second language like a native, and so on. Bilingualism was only just beginning to be seen in more favorable terms.

Forty English–French bilinguals in Paris took part in our study: fourteen simultaneous bilinguals, twenty-four late bilinguals, and two trilinguals. We attempted to diversify their age and occupation. Some were students but we also had teachers, business people, stay-at-home parents, diplomats,

[2] Haugen's book was originally published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in 1953. It was that edition that I consulted for my Master's thesis. I later worked with the better-known 1969 edition cited here.

[3] Also called transfer and, more recently, cross-linguistic influence.

retirees, and so on. Each one participated separately in a one-hour session where they first answered a questionnaire regarding their biography, their knowledge and use of their languages, their language history, which languages, if any, perturbed them, whether they were conscious of making interferences, whether they felt they were bilingual, and so on. We also asked them about behaviors such as counting, praying, and arguing – questions that were often asked of bilinguals at the time. Then they took part in a conversation *à trois* in which we asked them to reply in the language that they were spoken to in. I spoke English and my colleague French. We covered everyday topics such as politics, literature, music, painting, fashion, and so on. Finally, we asked our participants to do two small tasks. The first one was to translate words, phrases, and idioms from one language to the other. Examining them now, we were clearly seeking to find out how they would deal with homophones, homographs, and calques. The second task was to describe pictures we showed them. They could use the language of their choice to do so.

Our data analysis was very simple, basically drawing up summary tables with little statistics, and was clearly influenced by our state of knowledge of bilingualism at the time. We looked for interferences but did recognize that our participants were in a bilingual environment because they knew that the two of us spoke both languages. So when we could, we classified what were clearly code-switches and speech borrowings into a "parler bilingue" (bilingual speech) category, a term we coined in that 1968 work. Since we didn't have better terms at the time, we described these elements as "interferences in the presence of a person or people who understand(s) both languages." Here are a few examples with the code-switches underlined and the translations in parentheses: "I don't like the pièces à thèse" (problem play); "that piano is a casserole" (pan); "Je ne pense pas (I don't think so) . . . it's very far fetched."

We found that our participants had a very traditional view of bilingualism. Half told us that being bilingual meant being equally fluent in the two languages or speaking them effortlessly. Others mentioned thinking in the one or the other language, passing culturally as English in England and French in France, and going from one language to the other without any effort. As for their opinion about the phenomenon, we noted that they were proud of being bilingual. Some did mention a few difficulties, though, such as having to adapt to a different language/culture, finding friends, changing jobs or schools, having to choose what their main language would be, having to deal with personality issues, and so on.

The greatest part of our data analysis pertained to errors our participants made, most notably interferences. At the phonetic level, we found that either they didn't make any interferences (six of the forty), or did so in only one language (the vast majority). Only four made phonetic interferences in both languages. At the lexical level, in addition to elements of "bilingual speech,"

we tabulated instances where a participant didn't know a word in one of the languages, as well as traditional false friends such as "classic" for "classical," "virtuose" for "virtuoso," and so on. It is at the grammatical level that we found the most errors, some due to interferences but many also due to an incomplete knowledge of the language in question. These concerned verb tense, mode and voice, agreement, word order, prepositions, articles, and other.

In sum, this piece of work was conducted along the lines of studies at the time, where error analysis was the main approach used. There were glimmers of things to come such as separating elements produced in front of bilinguals from those due to within- and between-language deviations, and putting the emphasis on language use instead of language proficiency when describing bilingualism. On the whole, though, the study was very much a reflection of the "old way" of seeing things, and it certainly played a contrasting role in how I was to consider bilinguals and bilingualism several years later.

1.3 A Survey of the Field of Bilingualism

For the next ten years, I was busy learning to be an experimental psycholinguist, doing my PhD with Harlan Lane, starting to publish, and moving and adapting to life in the United States (see Grosjean, 2019). When in the late 1970s, Carlos Soares, a graduate student, asked me to be his advisor for a thesis on language lateralization in bilinguals, I readily accepted. It encouraged me to offer a course on bilingualism and I started looking around for a good introductory book to the field. I couldn't find one and thought that maybe I should write one myself. Oh for the audacity of youth! Harvard University Press showed interest in such a book and I worked on it for the next sixteen months. I handed it in in the summer of 1981 and it was published in 1982. It was a wonderful entry into a field that was still rather new to me, and it gave me a breadth of knowledge I would not have had otherwise.

Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism (Grosjean, 1982) was one of the first new-generation books on bilingualism that surveyed the field as it stood at that time. Hugo Baetens Beardsmore's (1982) book, *Bilingualism: Basic Principles*, came out the same year, René Appel and Pieter Muysken's (1987) *Language Contact and Bilingualism* was published five years later, and Suzanne Romaine's (1989) *Bilingualism* appeared seven years later.

My book (henceforth *Life*) was organized from the macro to the micro level in six chapters. The first two chapters, "Bilingualism in the World" and "Bilingualism in the United States," examined the sociopolitical aspects of bilingualism that touched on language policy, linguistic minorities, the evolution of bilingualism at the societal level, bilingual education in the United

States, and language maintenance and shift. The third chapter, "Bilingualism in Society," concentrated on attitudes toward language groups and languages, language choice, code-switching at the societal level, and bilingualism and biculturalism. The next two chapters examined the bilingual child and the bilingual adult and concentrated on becoming bilingual, describing a person's bilingualism, being educated in two languages, the effects of bilingualism, the psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics of bilingualism, and the bilingual as a person. The last chapter, "Bilingual Speech and Language," pertained to the linguistics of bilingualism when bilinguals are speaking to monolinguals and when they are speaking to bilinguals. It ended with the linguistic legacy of bilingualism. In what follows, I will spend a bit more time on each chapter in order to give the reader some idea of the knowledge I gathered that was to influence me in the years to come.

In the preface to *Life* I made a few observations that set the stage for what was to follow. The first concerned how I would define bilinguals: "people who use two or more languages in their everyday life" (vii). This emphasis on language use instead of language fluency/proficiency would follow me throughout my career. Indeed, contrary to general belief, bilinguals are rarely equally fluent in their languages; some speak one language better than another, others use one of their languages in specific situations, and others still can only read or write one of the languages they speak. The second observation was that bilingualism is present in practically every country of the world, in all classes of society, in all age groups; it has been estimated that half of the world's population is bilingual. And third, I expressed a personal opinion on bilingualism that has guided me ever since: "For me, both as a bilingual and as a psycholinguist, bilingualism is neither a problem nor an asset but quite simply a fact of life that should be dealt with in as unbiased a way as possible." I failed to add a fourth observation that only became apparent to me over time: The field of bilingualism, although much smaller back then, was already extremely vibrant and contained much valuable research. It is thanks to it that we have been able to make headway since, and reach the stage we are at today.

The World

When preparing the first chapter, "Bilingualism in the World," I was impressed by the scholarship of researchers such as William Mackey, Evan Glyn Lewis, Heinz Kloss, and Lachman Khubchandani. For the section on the extent of bilingualism, they helped me realize that bilingualism could be found in border areas between two language groups, in specific areas of countries where linguistic minorities are concentrated, throughout populations, in urban areas, in certain occupations, in specific social classes, and so on. As Lewis (1976)