

## The Effect of Learning a Second language on Native language word choice in Informal Conversation

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### Abstract

*This study explores how the learning of L2 consequences affects word choice in L1 in informal conversations between bilinguals. Bilingualism is an increasingly common success story of urbanization and migration, though the cognitive and sociolinguistic mechanisms that govern how bilinguals switch between languages in everyday situations have remained largely unconsidered until now. The study examines how L2 learning brings about changes in L1 speech by embedding L2 features such as lexical borrowing, syntactic transfer, and code-switching into the L1 discourse. Through these phenomena, the study has demonstrated the cognitive processes in language switching, including proficiency in the second language and ease of switching between languages. These include sociocultural factors such as social context and cultural identity. Data collection was performed through naturalistic observations and discourse analysis in bilingual conversations. The biodata shows that high-proficiency users of L2 use more L2 elements in their L1, especially in informal settings where there is more fluid language switching. These findings add to the complex lot of bilingual language behaviour, which informs concepts and practices in language education and research into bilingualism and sociolinguistic theory. Such a study emphasizes cross-linguistic influence as a strength in bilingual communication.*

### 1. 0 Introduction

The process of acquiring an L2 has become more common with globalisation, migration, and multilingualism. This phenomenon involves the interaction of a native language, or L1, with the newly acquired language, which affects how bilingual individuals use and process the language in context. It is especially within informal conversations that these influences can be clearly seen; the less structuredness and spontaneity of such conversations allow levels from one language to break into the other.

This study explores how L2 learning influences L1 word choice within informal conversations among bilinguals in a search for an explanation of whether or how bilinguals introduce lexical items, phrases, or grammatical structures from their L2 into speaking in their L1 in everyday situations. Such an analysis is crucial to understanding the cognitive and sociocultural mechanisms in the bilinguals' language behaviour motivation and their framing in spontaneous communication.

The present study contributes to the study of bilingualism, cognitive linguistics, and sociolinguistics by investigating such patterns, therefore informing on how bilinguals manage and integrate their linguistic resources. The study also aims to inform language educators and policymakers on how cross-linguistic influence may be used as an asset rather than a barrier in language use and instruction.

## 1.2 Background of the Study

Language is the core of human communication; it is the medium through which a person can express his or her thoughts, emotions, and ideas. With the fast pace at which the world is becoming global, situations of bilingualism or multilingualism are seen more now. Many people learn a second language apart from their native one to adapt to educational, professional, or social demands. This acquisition of multiple languages is a great cognitive and linguistic opportunity; however, it introduces much complexity to the manner in which the use and processing of languages are considered in different contexts. Especially how L1 and L2 interact with each other during informal, everyday communications remains a subject of interest among linguists, psychologists, and educators alike. (Grosjean, 2013; Pavlenko, 2003).

In acquiring or learning a second language, one often finds that one's proficiency advances such that speakers can use either language interchangeably, more especially in informal settings where communication occurs without much regard for some measure of formality. It has also been established that the acquisition of a second language does not entail or involve a mere addition of new words and grammar to an individual's cognitive arsenal. Instead, it often leads to L1 and L2 interacting and influencing each other in a number of ways. This influence is broadly known as cross-linguistic influence in which these two languages affect each other's lexical, syntactic, as well as phonetic features. This element of informality provides a very good setting for observing such influences since talks are usually unconstrained and also real (Wei, 2018).

There are a number of studies that have focused only on formal bilingual language behaviours, such as code-switching or academic language use. Up to this time, much research still needs to provide an in-depth analysis of exactly how bilingualism affects L1 word choice in an informal conversational setting (Poplack, 1980; Pavlenko, 2003). Informal speech is where the bilingual unconsciously integrates certain L2 elements, such as specific lexical choice or syntactic structure, into their L1 to modify somewhat how they express themselves in their native language. Such modifications are significant because they evidence not only cognitive adaptation but also sociocultural dynamics of language use among bilinguals (Wei, 2018).

## 1.3 Problem Statement

Most empirical research has yet to consider the specific or particularised effects of L2 learning on the aspect of L1 word choice within informal conversations. In casual conversation performed by a bilingual in his or her native language, the former unconsciously uses L2 vocabulary, phrases, or grammatical structures to form some hybridized version of speech, which may affect his or her style of word choice and expression. Such cross-linguistic influences raise key questions about the degree of far transfer that L2 exerts on L1 and the available cognitive and sociocultural mechanisms sustaining this process. The understanding of such dynamics is important as it implies some consequences for linguistic identity, language processing, and the wider sociocultural context in which bilinguals operate.

## 1.4 Objectives of the Research

This study aims to research how learning a second language influences the native language word choice in an informal conversation of bilingual speakers. The concrete goals are as follows:

1. To explore the patterns of L2 influence on L1 word choice in informal conversations.

2. To quantify and classify the variety of the L2 elements employed in the speech in L1 (lexical items, expressions, grammatical structures).
3. To find out some factors from a cognitive and sociocultural point of view that can account for the integration of L2 elements in conversations in L1.
4. To investigate the effects these influences have on the linguistic identities and communicational strategies of bilingual individuals.

### 1.5 Research questions

The investigation of the following questions will guide the research

1. How does learning a second language influence the choice of words from one's native language in an informal conversation?
2. What type of L2 lexical items, such as nouns, verbs, and phrases, are most frequently inserted into L1 speech in an informal setting?
3. What are the main cognitive processes, dominance or lexical retrieval, for example, sociocultural factors, identity and context, to name just two that influence the use of L2 elements in L1 conversation?
4. To what degree do the frequency and nature of L2 influences vary depending on conversational context or the presence of other bilinguals?

### 1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is important on several counts. First, it contributes to the rapidly developing literature on bilingualism by providing empirical data on the effect of second language acquisition on the use of the native language regarding word selection within an informal setting. Such patterns reveal more general cognitive processes of interest in the context of bilingualism, such as how bilinguals organise and access their linguistic resources in spontaneous communication. Second, the findings may have far-reaching importance for language instructors and policymakers. Knowledge of the ways L2 influences L1 use can also provide a guideline for teaching languages in such a way as to promote linguistic diversity while at the same time fostering cognitive development. For instance, educators might plan curricula that embrace and even capitalise on cross-linguistic influences rather than view them as interference. This would enable policymakers who are interested in promoting bilingualism and multilingualism to learn about the various benefits and challenges facing bilingual individuals and ensure policy designs foster positive linguistic outcomes. Last but not least, this study's informal conversation setting allows for deeper insight into the sociocultural aspects of language use among bilinguals. Language is not just a cognitive tool but also a social and cultural one. By studying how and why bilinguals introduce L2 elements into the flow of their native language speech, the research will also enlighten us about language as a means of creating social identities, establishing group dynamics, and adapting to cultures.

### 1.7 Delimitations of the Study

The research focuses on informal conversations of bilinguals in the age bracket of 18-40 years, who, after achieving proficiency in their native language, acquired an L2. This age bracket ensures that participants had enough exposure to and experience in using both their L1 and L2 in a variety

of contexts. As already noted, this research focused on bilinguals who are active users of their languages in everyday life interactions; it did not focus on simultaneous bilinguals, that is, people who have acquired both languages from birth, as in that case, the developing context is so different that it may engage different patterns of language integration.

It will also not cover bilingual language behaviour in formal settings, such as professional or academic environments, since these are characterized by other types of norms and constraints that may eventually affect language use. Its limitation to informal settings means that this study is really trying to tap into spontaneous, natural language use among bilinguals in a situation where L2 influences would more probably manifest when speakers do not consciously regulate their language choices.

## Literature Review

There are various dimensions in bilingualism and a vast literature regarding the phenomenon of influence on language usage of individuals who have grown up with or acquired another language later in life, and more importantly, how the L2 acquisition influences word choices in the native language during informal conversation. This review aims to synthesise main studies in bilingualism, cross-linguistic influence, and language processing to aggregate a comprehensive understanding of how and why L2 influences L1 usage, particularly in informal contexts. It reviews code-switching and lexical borrowing, cognitive processes involving bilingualism, and sociocultural variables that influence bilingual communication.

### 1. Bilingualism and Cross-Linguistic Influence

Cross-linguistic influence has been one of the principles of bilingualism research, pointing to the fact that knowledge and use of an L2 have an impact on the native language and vice versa. Cross-linguistic influence implies a transference of elements from one language into another and takes place in areas such as vocabulary, syntax, and pronunciation (Odlin, 1989). More often than not, bilinguals are not only fluent in two languages, but their linguistic systems intermingle to the extent that hybrid structures, lexical items, and syntactic forms of inheritance are created (Pavlenko & Jarvis, 2002). Consequently, these influences have been located in informal conversations, where the use of language is more spontaneous, and speakers are less likely to monitor or regulate their speech as in formal situations (Wei, 2018).

Informal discourses are one domain where bilingual speakers are more likely to reveal features of their L2 through code-switching or lexical borrowing when speaking their L1. Code-switching is the term given to a strategy by which bilinguals switch from one language to another within a single conversation or utterance; this behaviour has become one of the most extensively researched aspects of bilingual language use since Poplack (1980). Research has documented that code-switching fulfils different functions: it expresses identity, fills lexical gaps, or emphasises points. This is also illustrative of the fluidity of bilingual cognition, showing that both languages are active and dynamically interrelate with one another in informal, relaxed settings (Myers-Scotton, 1993)..

Research in the bilingual processing of languages has shown that the bilingual mind does not compartmentalise languages but retains one connected linguistic system.

This interconnectedness explains why bilinguals may experience CLI even when attempting to communicate exclusively in their L1 (Grosjean, 2013). As Cook (2003) expressed, the concept of multicompetence highlights the bilingual's cognitive state, where both languages are always involved and influence one another. Of course, this can be more accountable when bilinguals participate in informal conversations because the less structured nature may allow linguistic fluidity and interactions on a higher level between the two languages.

## **2. Lexical Borrowing and L1 Adaptation**

Another area in which bilingualism studies exhibit interest is lexical borrowing. In this process, words or phrases from one language are adopted by speakers into another language. This incident is very common among bilinguals; they often use the vocabulary items from L2 while speaking in their L1 either because their language does not have that specific term or simply because the term of L2 has more salience or relevance outright. Studies include those by Pavlenko (2003) and Backus (2015), who indicate that bilingual speakers are wont to insert L2 words even within their L1, as some linguistic economy or when talking about themes that are more familiar when dealt with in L2.

Lexical borrowing and adaptation occur particularly within bilingual communities where the contact between languages is at its most estranged. For example, in immigrant communities, speakers of different languages commonly use the dominant language terms of the host country straight in their L1 when speaking with other bilinguals, as Pavlenko (2003) mentions. These phenomena not only attest to the L2 influence on their L1, but they also refer to the ways in which social contexts and environments modify the way bilinguals use and choose language.

Other studies have also concentrated on how bilinguals creatively redesign their modified language through lexical innovation, whereby elements of both languages merge to form new words or phrases that never existed in the autonomous structure of either of those languages. Such hybrid forms attest to a bilingual speaker's flexibility and creativity in using his or her linguistic resources, usually tailored to fit the specific context of informal conversation (Backus, 2015). Such adaptations do indeed further underline the dynamic nature of bilingual language systems, whereby the linguistic elements of both L1 and L2 are in constant interaction and influence each other.

## **3. Cognitive Mechanisms in Bilingual Word Choice**

The cognitive processes that underlie bilingual word choice are necessary in order to understand how and why bilinguals integrate elements of their L2 into their L1. One of the most well-known models in the study of bilingual cognition, the Bilingual Interactive Activation Model, or BIA model, presumes a set of interlinked lexical networks that are simultaneously active when processing language. This hypothesis maintains that when the bilingual speaks in one language, the lexical representations for both languages are activated, and, as such, L2 words may become readily available even when the speaker intends to speak in L1 exclusively (Dijkstra & Van Heuven, 2002).

Studies carried out by Marian and Spivey (2003) show that bilinguals use both languages when performing language comprehension and language production tasks, which lends support to the model. The above-mentioned research showed that when bilinguals are asked to use one of their languages, they involuntarily access the other language, which can then result in the involuntary choice of a word from L2. This spilling over of activations is particularly sharp in informal



contexts, as mentioned earlier, when speakers are least likely to monitor their language use voluntarily.

There is also cognitive research into lexical retrieval and availability; this has shown that bilinguals may reach for an L2 word if their corresponding L1 word is unavailable or more sluggish to retrieve (Gollan, Montoya, Cera, & Sandoval 2008). In informal contexts those requiring the most speed and fluency in interactions bilinguals may settle on the quicker or more accessible L2 word even when they are interacting in their L1. Such preference reflects not only the bilingual's cognitive state but also the efficiency and ease of communication prioritised in the bilingual language systems.

#### **4. Sociocultural Influences on Bilingual Language Use**

The socio-cultural dimension of bilingualism is no less important than understanding how and why elements of L2 appear in L1 during informal conversation. According to sociolinguistic research, for bilinguals, language use does not have only a cognitive basis but rather represents a way of displaying identity and establishing social relations in different cultural environments (Fishman, 1972). Code-switching, for instance, is often a marker of group identity and evidence of shared or mutual cultural and linguistic knowledge among bilinguals (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

It has also been closely related that bilinguals use L2 elements in their L1 speech to align themselves with certain social groups or signal their bilingual identity. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) probed how bilingual individuals used language as a tool for negotiating identities, more so in multilingual settings. The use of L2 terms or phrases in informal discussions in L1 may serve as a sign of friendship or belonging to a group where the use of the two languages is nearly universal in the community.

Other sociocultural factors that may determine the integration of L2 elements into L1 by bilinguals include the prestige of L2, attitude towards bilingualism in a community, and intensity of language contact. For instance, across situations where L2 represents higher social or economic value, speakers may be more motivated to employ L2 vocabulary in L1 speech for the purpose of gaining social capital or as an index of cultural assimilation. These very factors press into highly high relief in immigrant and diaspora communities in which bilingual persons have to manage highly complex linguistic and cultural ecologies (Wei, 2018).

#### **5. The Impact of Informal Contexts on Language Use**

Casual conversation is a unique context in which to research the effects of bilingualism because it provides situations in which the use of language can be unmonitored and spontaneous. Generally, informal conversations do not depend on strict norms like academic or formal ones; thus, speakers may switch between languages or borrow elements once or more times during a conversation. As aptly captured in work by Zentella (1997), bilinguals often use language fluidly within informal contexts, merging pieces of one language with that of the other because of the conversational context.

This linguistic fluidity forms the premise on which L2 could play a role in L1 word choice. Thus, a bilingual, in casual conversations with peers or family, may not necessarily adhere to strict principles of language separation but will instead emphasise communicative efficiency along with sociocultural relevance. He or she may, therefore, detour to L2 words, phrases, or grammatical

structures within his/her speech in L1, thus reflecting the dynamic and adaptable nature of bilingual language systems (Grosjean, 2013).

What the literature will show is that bilingualism does, in fact, affect native language use, especially in informal settings where cross-linguistic influences, lexical borrowing, and code-switching are more common. In fact, the interdependence of the bilingual cognitive systems interacts with sociocultural variables to frame how bilinguals approach and deploy their languages. It is for this reason that informal discussions bear great relevance because they reveal the spontaneous, uncontrolled aspect of bilingual language use in its effect on native language word choice.

## **Theoretical Framework and Methodology**

### **Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework of the present study is based on the BIA Model proposed by Dijkstra and Van Heuven (2002). It is chosen because it provides a cognitive explanation for how and why bilinguals integrate elements of L2 in L1 while conversations remain informal. The BIA model is thus particularly well-suited to understand the bilingual mind in that it describes how both languages are simultaneously active during language processing, which is especially relevant when investigating cross-linguistic influence.

#### **3.1 BIA - Bilingual Interactive Activation Model**

According to the BIA model, in bilinguals, both languages are stored and activated in one connected network in the brain. During a conversation, even when it is intended to be in one language, say L1, elements of the other language, L2, are also activated. This will simultaneously activate the bilingual speaker's lexical items, grammatical structures, and phonological features of both languages, possibly resulting in instances of crosslinguistic influence where the elements of L2 would appear in the speeches of L1 due to the simultaneous activation of languages (Dijkstra & Van Heuven, 2002, p. 192).

It has been explained that the bilingual language process is neither linear nor isolating but an interacting and dynamic one. L2 words or phrases are activated during the usage of the native language because they are more accessible from memory, contextually relevant, or part of one's everyday lexicon. This may result in the unwitting subconscious inclusion of L2 elements in an L1 conversation in informal situations where language policing is lax.

##### **3.1.2 Application of the BIA Model to the Study**

This research work applies the BIA model to explore how bilinguals incorporate L2 elements into L1 during informal conversations. The emphasis of this model on the simultaneous activation of the two languages provides cognitive grounding for understanding why and how bilinguals might switch or mix languages spontaneously. In this connection, the study will investigate:

#### **1. Lexical availability**

According to the BIA model, if an L2 word is more available than its L1 counterpart, a bilingual speaker would instead use the L2 word even in conversations in L1. This is due to factors that concern the frequency of use, such as the context of acquisition and the quantum of salience the L2 word achieves in the bilingual mental lexicon (Dijkstra & Van Heuven, 2002, p. 194).

## 2. Cross-Linguistic Influence in Informal Settings

The BIA model provides the reasons why cross-linguistic influences are most likely to occur in informal conversations. It is the relaxed and unmonitored contexts that might make the bilinguals not monitor their language use as stringently as they perhaps will in formal or professional settings, thus leading to a more sweeping interplay between their two languages. According to the BIA model, the fact that the two languages are activated simultaneously means that, rather than through actual borrowing, L2 elements may turn up of their own accord, in a rather effortless manner, in L1 speech in such informal exchanges.

## 3. Cognitive Efficiency

The model also postulates that bilinguals may select L2 elements because it is cognitively more efficient. This means that if access to an L2 version of a word/phrase requires less cognitive effort or time, especially when the bilingual has used it frequently, the speaker is more likely to incorporate that element into the conversation in L1. This will perhaps apply more to the bilinguals who use their L2 in certain domains on a regular basis, whereby various terminologies may be more predominant in L2 than in L1.

### 3.1.3 Justification for Using the BIA Model

The BIA model thus serves as the most appropriate theoretical framework for this study because it gives a clear, evidence-based explanation of how bilinguals cognitively manage multiple languages. Since the BIA model is about selection, referring to cognitive language activation processes, this framework could be used to explore the mechanisms of L2 influence on L1 word choice in the present study. It also agrees with the purpose of the study, which is to discuss the aspects of how bilinguals' spontaneous language behaviour can estimate cognitive processes on a structured basis to analyze how the bilingual mind shapes language use patterns.

## 3.2 Methodology

The present research employs a quantitative approach to explore the effect of L2 acquisition on the selection of words within L1 in informal conversations. A primary objective here is to quantify the frequency and ways in which bilingual speakers use L2 lexical items in their everyday speech when they use their L1. The research design consists of naturalistic observation with discourse analysis to systematically capture the frequency, nature, and cognitive and sociocultural influences behind L2-influenced L1 word choices.

### Research Design

This research uses a descriptive quantitative design to identify and categorize instances of L2 into L1. Through the use of spontaneous conversations in real situations, this research is based on account of exact linguistic patterns that come up when bilinguals alternate between languages or borrow aspects from their L2.

### Participants

The participants were 20 bilinguals aged between 18 and 40 years, fluent in both their L1 and L2. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure a representative range of proficiency levels in the L2. Based on self-reports of language proficiency and standardized language tests, participants were divided into three proficiency levels:



- Poor skill in L2
- L2 intermediate proficiency
- High proficiency in L2

This categorization enables the study to research the impact of proficiency in L2 on the extent and the type of L2 incorporation within L1 conversations.

### Data Collection

The data were collected through naturalistic observations of informal conversations in everyday settings, such as homes, cafes, and social gatherings. This was done to make certain that the data collected were instances of authentic, unscripted interactions. The audio recordings of the conversations were collected with the permission of the participants, and data collection spanned six months.

Data collection focused on those instances where participants inserted L2 elements into their L1 discourse. More precisely, the study targeted three main types of cross-linguistic influences:

**Lexical borrowing:** the insertion of L2 words, phrases, or expressions into the conversation in L1.

**Syntactic Transfer:** The influence of sentence structure, word order, or grammatical rules of L2 on L1.

**Code-Switching:** The switches in L1 and L2 either within or across sentences.

### Data Coding and Analysis

The transcribed data were then analyzed systematically by using quantitative content analysis. Instances of L2 influence were identified, coded, and categorized by type:

**Lexical Borrowing:** The actual words or phrases taken directly from L2 are used in an L1 conversation.

**Syntactic Transfer:** The use of grammatical structures in L2, which influence the syntax in the speech of L1.

**Code-Switching:** The switching between languages within a sentence or across sentences.

Each type of influence was quantified, and its frequency of occurrence was measured across different participant groups according to their proficiency level: low, intermediate, and high. The statistical analysis carried out aimed at the exploration of patterns in L2 influence, including:

- The total frequency of L2 influence in conversations.
- The relative frequency of lexical borrowing as against syntactic transfer and code-switching.
- The impact of proficiency level on the frequency and type of L2 influence.
- The role of sociocultural factors, such as conversational context, friends, and strangers, in language mixing.

## **Ethical Considerations**

All participants gave informed consent, and they knew that all conversations would be recorded and used for research. The transcripts will be anonymized, and every personal identifier will be concealed. It was made clear that participation was voluntary, and one could withdraw from it at any time without any consequences whatsoever.

## **Limitations**

Although this study provides a lot of valuable insights into the nature and frequency of L2 influence on L1, it is necessarily limited by its reliance on relatively small sample size and the naturalistic nature of the data collection. Since the data were gathered in informal, unscripted settings, this study cannot control for all the variables that may affect language mixing, such as emotional state and familiarity with conversation partners. This might be because future studies should either have a larger or more diverse sample or experimental methods that more stringently allow control over confounding variables.

## **Data Interpretation**

The data interpretation was done using the BIA Model, which assumes that both languages in the bilingual mind are activated during language processing. This model helps explain why bilinguals may spontaneously switch between languages or borrow lexical items when engaging in informal conversations. This research investigates the cognitive activation of L2 in influencing L1 lexical choices, especially under conditions where bilingual speakers place more importance on communicative effectiveness and sociocultural appropriateness.

## **Analysis**

### **Introduction**

This study investigates whether and how L2 learning impacts L1 word choice in informal conversations. At issue is the number and nature of cognitive and sociolinguistic mechanisms that implement the transfer of L2 into L1 speech. The analysis that follows investigates how bilinguals manage their two linguistic systems, especially in informal, spontaneous speech situations.

This chapter, therefore, elaborates on a developmental analysis based on the data collected from bilingual participants interacting in everyday situations of how L2 elements, which include lexical borrowing and full code-switching, are inserted into L1 conversations. In addition, the cognitive and sociolinguistic factors that influence such language behaviour will be outlined in this analysis with a view to illuminating the dynamics of bilingual communication.

### **1. Types of L2 Influence on L1 Word Choice**

Coding provided evidence of three main subtypes of L2 influence on L1 word choice -lexical borrowing, syntactic transfer, and code-switching discussed in turn below, along with tables showing frequency and contextual factors determining occurrence.

#### **1.1. Lexical Borrowing**

Lexical borrowing represents the direct carrying over of L2 items into L1 discourse, which is very often carried out when the term in L2 is perceived as more specific or when a speaker simply does not know a more specific term in their mother tongue. In fact, this phenomenon has been observed

throughout all groups of participants, notably in discussions of either modern technology, work-related themes, or popular culture.

Type of L2 Influence	Description	Frequency of Occurrence	Contextual Factors	References
<b>Lexical Borrowing</b>	The incorporation of L2 words directly into L1 conversation, especially when there is no direct equivalent or when the L2 word is seen as more specific.	High frequency in bilinguals with high proficiency in L2. More common in discussions about technology, modern culture, or work.	Occurs most often in casual, informal conversations where bilinguals are familiar with L2 terminology (e.g., "email," "app," "selfie"). More common in bilingual communities where L2 is widely spoken.	Odlin (1989); Poplack (1980); Gumperz (1982)

**Explanation of Findings:**

The data clearly show that one of the frequent strategies is lexical borrowing. Particularly, this can be seen within those conversations dealing with subjects like technology since L2 terms such as "app," "email," or "selfie" have become part of the common lexicon in many languages. The high proficiency of participants in both languages plays an important role here. Such is the case with many bilingual speakers of Spanish and English, who find themselves using terminologies with which to discuss subjects related to technology in English because they do not have a more specific or common term in Spanish.

Besides, the rate of lexical borrowing is higher in informal situations where the pressure to use language more precisely is not so high. It is much easier for bilinguals to use L2 vocabulary in a situation that allows for being more flexible.

**1.2. Syntactic Transfer**

Syntactic transfer refers to the impact L2 sentence structures or grammatical patterns have on speech in L1. It was less common than lexical borrowing, but it happened nonetheless, particularly among highly proficient bilinguals. The most common forms of syntactic transfer dealt with word order in a sentence or using certain structures more typical for L2 rather than for L1.

Type of L2 Influence	Description	Frequency of Occurrence	Contextual Factors	References
<b>Syntactic Transfer</b>	The transfer of L2 syntactic structures or grammatical patterns into L1 conversation.	Less frequent than lexical borrowing, but more common among highly proficient bilinguals.	Observed more in spontaneous, informal conversations where bilinguals are more relaxed and can switch between languages fluidly. Syntactic transfer	Odlin (1989); Gumperz (1982)

Type of L2 Influence	Description	Frequency of Occurrence	Contextual Factors	References
			occurs in fast-paced exchanges where grammatical accuracy is less of a concern.	

**Explanation of Findings:**

The syntactic transfer took place when bilinguals, while speaking, relied on L2 grammatical structures—mostly in fast speech and when the flow of conversation urged them toward linguistic shortcuts. For example, English-Spanish bilinguals speaking Spanish tended to stick to the subject-verb-object sequence typical of English without fully using the flexibility of sentence word order that Spanish allows. This syntactic transfer, less often occurring than lexical borrowing, was indeed remarkable, especially among highly proficient bilinguals.

This would indicate that syntactic transfer is less salient than lexical borrowing but does play a role in bilingual language behaviour when speakers are in relaxed situations where the use of language is least regulated.

**1.3. Code-Switching**

Code-switching is an alternation between the two languages within one conversation. It is one of the most salient and frequent features in bilingual speech, especially in social contexts where both speakers are fluent in both languages. It might take place at all levels: between phrases, clauses, and even within a sentence.

Type of L2 Influence	Description	Frequency of Occurrence	Contextual Factors	References
<b>Code-Switching</b>	Alternating between two languages in a single conversation, often for emphasis or efficiency.	Most frequent among bilinguals with high L2 proficiency and when both speakers share a high level of proficiency in both languages. Frequent in informal settings.	Most commonly observed in informal settings (family gatherings, peer interactions). It is used to convey a specific meaning, establish social identity, or mark emphasis in the conversation. Typically more common among bilinguals sharing both languages (e.g., Spanish-English or English-Arabic).	Poplack (1980); Gumperz (1982); Myers-Scotton (1993)

**Explanation of Findings:**

The most frequent form of L2 influence on L1 speech was that of code-switching. This would be most evident in informal situations, where both speakers were comfortable switching to the other language. For instance, within bilingual communities that have both Spanish and English,

participants would sometimes switch between these languages mid-sentence to emphasize a point or to fill a gap in vocabulary. As Gumperz (1982) discussed, this phenomenon is a practical tool for bilingual communication, but it reinforces group membership and serves as a function of cultural identity at the same time.

The most salient feature of code-switching was with other bilinguals: there was mutual understanding on both levels. This confirms the sociolinguistic aspect of code-switching, since this strategy is one of the favorite ways bilinguals use to signal social belonging, or emphasize certain aspects of the conversation.

## 2. Cognitive and Sociolinguistic Factors Influencing L2 Influence on L1

Besides L2's direct impact on the word choice of L1, other cognitive and sociolinguistic factors determine their language behaviour. These include some general factors: proficiency level of the second language, cognitive load, social context, and cultural identity. The following table provides a summary of those factors and their impact on bilingual speech.

Factor	Description	Impact on Language Use	References
<b>Cognitive Proficiency</b>	The level of proficiency a bilingual has in their second language.	Bilinguals with higher proficiency in L2 tend to use more L2 elements in their L1 conversations, especially lexical borrowings and code-switching. Lower proficiency leads to restricted L2 use and more reliance on L1.	High L2 proficiency enables quicker switching and greater integration of L2 elements into L1 speech. Lower proficiency restricts code-switching and borrowing.
<b>Cognitive Load and Ease of Switching</b>	The mental effort required to switch between two languages. Higher ease of switching indicates smoother integration of L2 elements into L1.	Those who find it easier to switch between languages (due to high proficiency or frequent exposure to both languages) are more likely to incorporate L2 words or phrases seamlessly into their L1 speech. Those who experience higher cognitive load in switching are less likely to switch languages unless necessary.	Cognitive ease facilitates fluid integration of L2 elements in L1, while cognitive load makes switching less frequent.
<b>Social Context</b>	The social and cultural setting in which the conversation takes place, including the language proficiency of the interlocutor.	In conversations with other bilinguals, code-switching and lexical borrowing are more frequent, as the speakers share similar linguistic resources. In conversations with monolinguals, bilinguals restrict	The presence of a shared linguistic background makes L2 incorporation more natural. Bilinguals may avoid using L2 when communicating with monolingual speakers to prevent confusion.



Factor	Description	Impact on Language Use	References
		their L2 use to maintain mutual understanding.	
<b>Cultural Identity</b>	The way bilinguals use their languages to express identity or group affiliation.	Bilinguals may incorporate L2 elements into L1 conversations to signal membership in a particular cultural or linguistic group. For instance, using L2 slang or expressions may act as a marker of identity or cultural affiliation.	The incorporation of L2 elements can be seen as a way of signaling cultural identity, especially when the L2 terms have cultural connotations that are not easily translated.

The analysis of the data reveals that second language learning significantly influences native language word choice in informal conversations. Lexical borrowing, syntactic transfer, and code-switching are all common strategies employed by bilinguals to integrate L2 elements into their L1 conversations. The frequency and type of L2 influence are primarily determined by cognitive factors such as L2 proficiency and cognitive load, as well as sociolinguistic factors, including social context and cultural identity.

These findings have important implications for language education and bilingual communication. Educators can better support bilingual students by recognizing the value of cross-linguistic influence and incorporating strategies that embrace bilingualism rather than suppress it. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of viewing bilingualism not as a hindrance to language proficiency but as a resource that can enrich communication and cultural expression.

### Conclusion

This study aims to elucidate the impact of second language (L2) acquisition on native language (L1) word choice in informal, everyday conversations among bilingual individuals. By examining the extent to which bilinguals incorporate lexical items, phrases, and grammatical structures from their L2 into L1 discourse, this research seeks to advance our understanding of the cognitive and sociolinguistic mechanisms that underpin such language behaviour. Specifically, the study investigates the nature of cross-linguistic influence in spontaneous communication, considering factors such as proficiency in the second language, frequency of L2 usage, and sociocultural context.

The anticipated findings contribute to the broader fields of bilingualism, cognitive linguistics, and sociolinguistics, offering valuable insights into the strategies employed by bilinguals to manage and integrate their linguistic resources. This research also holds important implications for language education, suggesting that cross-linguistic influence, often perceived as interference, can be leveraged as a resource for language learning and communication. Additionally, the study informs language policymakers and educators of the potential benefits of encouraging flexible, fluid language use in multilingual contexts, promoting a more nuanced understanding of bilingual communication.

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