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Review: A LONG EXCITING JOURNEY IN BILINGUALISM RESEARCH

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by Annette M. B. de Groot

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A LONG EXCITING JOURNEY IN BILINGUALISM RESEARCH

Language and Cognition in Bilinguals and Monolinguals: An Introduction

By Annette M. B. de Groot. New York, NY: Psychology Press,
2011. xiii + 514 pp. Hardcover, £35.

Once upon a time, psycholinguistics was a monolingual affair. Nowadays, bilingualism is seen as a normal condition for human beings, and it is an omnipresent phenomenon in societies where most psycholinguistic research is produced. Today's psycholinguists ignore bilingualism at their own peril. The times are therefore ripe for an introduction that can present the rapidly growing field of the psycholinguistics of bilingualism to researchers and students from various backgrounds.

Language and Cognition in Bilinguals and Monolinguals: An Introduction is much more than an introduction. The volume makes a major contribution to the field, and in spite of its accessibility it is a serious read for interested researchers and postgraduate students from different backgrounds. Annette de Groot, professor of experimental psycholinguistics at the University of Amsterdam, is not only a major figure in bilingualism research who masters her field and has made major contributions to it. She also has long experience in making psycholinguistics research on bilingualism accessible to graduate students and researchers, having previously co-edited two widely used reference tools, *Tutorials in Bilingualism* (de Groot & Kroll, 1997) and the *Handbook of Bilingualism* (Kroll & de Groot, 2005). She is therefore the ideal person to write an introduction to the psycholinguistics of bilingualism. The resulting book is not the only introduction on the market (for example, see the notable *Introduction to Bilingualism: Principles and Processes* [Altarriba & Heredia, 2008]), but it surely is the only single-authored introductory volume that spans more than 500 pages. Producing such a long and authoritative text requires knowledge, experience, and dedication, and the field should be grateful to Professor de Groot for tackling and completing such a tour de force.

The main attractions of this volume are its extensive, updated, and authoritative coverage and its great clarity. The volume is chockablock with information, clearly and expertly presented. At first glance, it can appear daunting, with its 500 pages in a tightly packed two-column format, with page after page covered in dense text, very long chapters (50–70 pages each),

and a weight of more than two kilograms (hardcover). There are no cute pictures of bilingual babies or colorful graphs, everything is black, white, or gray, and all pictures are informative rather than decorative, in a format that will be familiar to those who learned or taught from previous editions of Harley's *The Psychology of Language* (2001). The book cites a large number of studies, presenting both seminal papers from the past and recent research and providing a good historical perspective from the early studies to 2009 (the book was published in 2010, despite its 2011 copyright). The 35 pages of references will keep students busy reading for quite a while. However, de Groot does not simply list facts; she puts them in historical context, explains which topics have been widely studied and which ones have only become possible because of which technical advances, and she points readers to what is very new, what is currently used, and what is definitely passé—a very important approach for students who often struggle to see things in perspective. The volume presents a number of research topics that have become prominent only in recent times, from third-language acquisition to simultaneous interpreting, from sign language to bilingual thought. Theory is well presented, with a clear view of current trends and discussions of major debates that nicely present both sides of the fence. de Groot is obviously well placed to present her own copious contributions in various areas of bilingualism research. Judging from the author's index, her name is the most frequently cited in the book, closely followed by the name of her collaborator, Judith Kroll, and readers are lucky to be able to hear all these stories straight from the horse's mouth.

The other strong point, and probably the strongest selling point of the book, is clarity. The textbook reveals the experienced teacher and educational writer who has learnt not to assume too much knowledge on the part of her audience. de Groot happily drops in explanations of even the most obvious (to lecturers) acronyms and terms. As someone guilty of absent-mindedly filling her PowerPoint slides with mysterious acronyms, I admired de Groot's thoughtfulness in clarifying the meaning of "C" and "V" in "CV syllable," not to mention explanations of other "self-evident" conventions, explaining that a Spanish-Catalan bilingual has probably acquired Spanish as a chronological first language, for example. This is not as self-evident as it may appear.

The text does an excellent job of explaining methods and tasks. These sections are extremely clear and useful, and I advise lecturers to point their students to these sections even if they adopt a different text-

book. Methods and tasks are described in detail, visualized in pictures, and summarized in tables. The author discusses different ways to implement the same technique and different names to call it. In case readers still have doubts, methods and tasks are then explained again in sufficient detail in the *Glossary* at the end of the volume. de Groot is very good at explaining the rationale of studies. Students sometimes understand how a study was done but not why it was done this way. The author does an admirable job of explaining both how and why. She explains how a specific finding answers the research question and what opposite results would have meant. For instance, in describing a study of speech perception that used novel syllables, de Groot first italicizes the word *novel* and then, just in case someone missed that, explains that results were not due to syllable familiarity because all syllables were new (p. 35). Everything is clarified in equally painstaking detail. Results from main studies are often described in the text and also presented with table and graphs, either taken from the original paper or created for this book. These will be very useful both for students who want to read the original paper and for those who do not.

One reason for the book's clarity is that all chapters follow the same structure. Each chapter contains an introduction of a couple of pages, which presents the main concepts, terminology, history, and importance of the topic. For instance, the chapter on cognitive consequences of bilingualism opens with two 1920s articles, describes the relevance of the topic outside academia for policy makers and educators, and links it to research reviewed in previous chapters. Introductions are followed by a section on methods and tasks, which ranges from a couple of pages for more basic research areas to more than 10 pages for research on the bilingual brain. This section is detailed and clear, and it does a very good job of explaining how methods have evolved. For instance, in describing the "language-switching paradigm" (p. 281), the author describes the "blocked" design used in early studies and provides four references to such early studies, then moves on to more recent studies. Another very useful feature is that bilingual research is always preceded by a preliminary discussion of monolingual findings. This helps the reader situate bilingual research, as it often draws on or stems from monolingual research in its context, and it is particularly useful to orient readers who do not have a background in psycholinguistics. Each chapter then presents a series of topics, each one discussed in a section, and each section ends with a conclusion that sums up the sec-

tion. Finally, each chapter ends with a *Summary*, a couple of pages of bullet lists that summarize the main points, with each bullet point consisting of three or fewer sentences, like a dense PowerPoint slide. These lists will help readers revise their understanding of the main points of the chapter. The detailed explanation of methods and results, the coverage of monolingual psycholinguistics literature, and the extreme attention to detail make the book suitable for students without a background in psycholinguistics.

The book's stated target audience consists primarily of graduate students and researchers in applied linguistics, cognitive psychology, and linguistics. Personally, I would add education to this list. Given the ever-increasing number of school children who are bilingual, and given that most school children around the world are learning at least one foreign language in school, education specialists need to know much more about bilingualism and its effects on language use and cognition. I am using the volume as recommended reading for an MA module in bilingualism in a department of education, and reactions have been positive.

The book consists of eight long chapters. These cover what one would expect from a psycholinguistics textbook, from language acquisition to comprehension and speech production, but with a focus on the bilingual. There are also chapters that would not feature in a book about monolingual psycholinguistics, such as a chapter on language control and one on the cognitive consequences of bilingualism.

The first chapter, "Introduction and Preview," very briefly presents psycholinguistics and bilingualism. This very short chapter does no justice to the rest of the book. It introduces bilingualism in just over three pages, including all terminology and main concepts. I disliked the definition of bilinguals as "people who know and use two languages" (p. 1), which was not discussed or justified further. Readers who are not familiar with the main concepts of bilingualism research will need additional sources to get some grounding in bilingualism. Unfortunately, the chapter does not point readers to suitable sources, so if lecturers want students to be familiar with issues of definition, terminology, and measurement of bilingualism, they will have to point their students to one of the many good introductions to bilingualism currently on the market.

With the second chapter, "Early Bilingualism and Age of Acquisition Effects on (First and) Second Language Learning," de Groot begins her impressive journey. The chapter opens with an introduction and a clear description of methods and tasks such as the high-amplitude sucking paradigm and the pref-

erential looking technique. It then covers two topics: early bilingualism, which focuses on phonological and lexical development in monolingual and bilingual infants, and age effects in first-language acquisition and in adults' second-language acquisition, including a discussion of the critical period hypothesis. Chapter 3 looks at "Late Foreign Vocabulary Learning and Lexical Representation." It explains the central role of vocabulary acquisition in foreign language learning; evaluates vocabulary instruction methods; discusses factors that affect vocabulary acquisition, including characteristics of words such as concreteness and form similarity to L1 words and characteristics of the learner such as prior knowledge and phonological memory; evaluates the revised hierarchical model; and discusses vocabulary teaching in the classroom. Chapters 4 and 5 deal mostly with lexical access in bilinguals, the former covering word recognition, and the latter word production. Chapter 4 discusses bilinguals' processing of interlexical homophones and homographs, illustrates the bilingual interactive activation model of lexical access, and then reviews the scant literature on bilinguals' sentence processing. Chapter 5 discusses bilinguals' speech production, referring to research on picture naming, the Stroop effect, and word translation, and then examines foreign accent. Chapter 6 looks at language control in bilinguals, with more than a third of the chapter devoted to language control in simultaneous interpreters. Chapter 7, "Cognitive Consequences of Bilingualism and Multilingualism," covers various aspects of cross-linguistic influence on language use, including third-language use and first- and second-language loss, and then moves on to effects of bilingualism on nonverbal cognition, including cognitive control and thought. The final chapter covers the study of the bilingual brain and is followed by a glossary, references, and author and subject indices.

Being an overview of a field, the volume reflects the limitations of the field. I can imagine readers complaining that, despite the title, the volume does not cover multilingualism well enough, and those with a linguistics background may complain about the use of slashes rather than square brackets in the chapter on phonology, or about the lack of references to any linguistics sources that may describe the aspects of language studied by psycholinguists, for instance, when phonemes are introduced. These are shortcomings not of this volume but of the field itself, which are faithfully reflected in this volume.

The book has been accurately produced with the impeccable editing and proofreading we have come to expect from Psychology Press. I was slightly an-

nnoyed by the fact that text on one side of the page was visible on the other, and by the darkness of some gray backgrounds in tables and pictures, although the latter seems to vary across chapters. I was also slightly disappointed by the subject index, in particular by the absence of entries for languages in this index. Furthermore, I would have liked some suggestions for readings at the end of each chapter. I hope these points will be taken into account for the next edition.

Despite the very minor drawbacks discussed in the two previous paragraphs, I believe that this volume is a godsend for students and lecturers alike. Students will be surprised that so much complex information can be made so easily digestible. Lecturers will be delighted that so much work has been done for them, and although they may want to supplement the book with other sources (an introduction to bilingualism, linguistics sources), they will be able to rely confidently on this extensive and authoritative volume for their teaching.

In the last sentence of the volume (p. 446), de Groot describes her book as a "long journey through the multifaceted study of language and cognition in bilinguals and multilinguals." One can only agree with this description and hope that many researchers and postgraduate students will be willing to embark on this long journey, which will provide them with a very strong grounding in a rapidly evolving and exciting field.

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