

# Chapter 1

## Central Language Hypothesis

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this chapter is to define and present central language integration by neurolinguistic and psycholinguistic aspects in bilingual and multilingual persons in emotion-based circumstances. Central language hypothesis (CLH) imparts that one language in the subconscious mind of bilingual and multilingual individuals is more suppressive and it is structured as central language. It has an emotional background such that if limbic cortex of the brain gets any stimulus (e.g., fear, anxiety, sorrow, etc.), the brain directly produces the CL. This phenomenon distinguishes CL from the notion of mother tongue because mother tongue is the first language that is acquired at home, but CL may be the second language as well.*

### INTRODUCTION

The current paper, by neurolinguistic and psycholinguistic aspects, defines and presents Central Language which ingenerates in bilingual and multilingual brain in some emotion based circumstances. It is a fact that the number of multilingual and bilingual individuals is increasing day by day. Distinctive studies about bilingualism and multilingualism are presented to understand the bilingual and multilingual brain and mind by researchers (see Wei & Moyer, 2008). There are various statements about the description of bilingualism. For instance, according to Bhatia (2006), to be bilingual, end result of the second language acquisition is required. That is to say, the end result of second language acquisition is bilingualism. In addition, Bilingual speaker is fluent in two languages (Harley, 2008). Moreover, childhood is critical on bilingual acquisition that acquiring two languages in childhood means bilingual

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acquisition (Deuchar & Quay, 2000). On the other hand, Edwards (2006) states that everybody who knows at least a few words in another language is bilingual speaker. Grosjean (2013): “Bilinguals use their languages for different purposes, in different domains of life, to accomplish different things. Their level of fluency in a language depends on their need for that language. Hence many bilinguals are more fluent in a given language, and some cannot read or write one of their languages” (p. 7). Discrepant phenomena point that there isn’t any consensus among researchers on what the bilingualism is. Also Li Wei (2000) presents different types of bilingualism and it can be seen from the Table 1.

No matter what bilingualism means, when bilingual/multilingual individuals switch in languages what happens on their mind is not definite and should be studied. Bilingual individuals are flexible to control their language output and they can use only one language or intentionally switch another as well, however how they choose the intended language and what mechanisms are used when they switch between languages remain as questions (Christoffels, Firk, & Schiller, 2007).

In daily lives, Bilingual/Multilingual people use code-switching while communicating. Individual differences about why and when they switch to another language is not clear. It is substantial to examine psychology of bilingual/multilingual individuals in order to comprehend aforesaid individual differences. Central Language Hypothesis clarifies the dilemma and puts emphasis on psychological perspective of language switching in bilingual/multilingual brain. In the brains of bilingual and multilingual individuals, one language is more suppressive as it dominates reflexes, emotions and senses. It is at the centre of the limbic cortex of the brain. This language is defined as *Central Language (CL)* in this paper. CL is the language which lies within the subconscious mind of a person. According to the Piaget’s theory of development, sensory development is the first in the brain so it is the core or centre of the brain, in this case, the language based on the sensory system (senses, reflexes and emotions) in bilinguals and multilinguals is the Central one. That’s why it is called as Central Language in this hypothesis. It is basically related to the sensory system of the brain. By the help of sufficient exposure, mind structures a language as CL. Central Language captures the subconscious so when there is a stimulus on limbic cortex (e.g. fear, anxiety, sadness or etc.) brain produces the Central Language. A bilingual/multilingual person who is in those situations reacts in CL unconsciously/reflexively. A bilingual/multilingual person might not be fluent or very competent in his/her CL. In that case it substantially means that being fluent or very competent in a language isn’t a clue or key of CL. And it’s possible to say that in some cases mother tongue of an individual might not be the CL of him/her. These phenomena distinguish CL from the notion of mother tongue (L1), because as the Harley (2008) defines that “mother tongue is the first language which is acquired at home” but CL may be the second language

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