

- **Defining bilingualism**
- **Bilingualism and society**

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*Background preparation:*

- *Kaplan (2016), Ch 7, “Being bilingual makes you smarter (or dumber)”, sec 7.1–7.2*

# 1. Introduction

- What does it mean to say that someone is **bilingual** (or multilingual)?
  - What categories of bilingual speakers does Kaplan recognize?
- What are some relationships between bilingualism at the **individual** and **societal** level?

# 1. Introduction

- Categories of bilingual **speakers**
  - **Balanced bilingual:** both languages from birth; used equally often and in similar contexts
  - **Unbalanced bilingual:**
    - a. More **proficient** in one language than in another — *or* —
    - b. Uses the languages in different **contexts**
- Patterns of bilingualism in **society**
  - **Bilingual** societies of **monolingual** individuals
  - **Bilingual** societies of **bilingual** individuals

# 1. Introduction

- Types of bilingual speakers
  - Balanced bilingual
  - Unbalanced bilingual
- Patterns of bilingualism in society
  - Bilingual societies of monolingual individuals
  - Bilingual societies of bilingual individuals
- Can we classify each of these factors in K's example scenarios (Kaplan 2016: 133)?

[\[link through Course Reserves\]](#) (on-campus version)

## 2. Relative language dominance in bilinguals

- Somewhat rare to find speakers who are *perfectly* balanced
  - Most have at least a difference in the contexts in which they use their languages

- Kaplan (2016: 134):

Some researchers have argued that there's essentially no such thing as a balanced bilingual — that all bilinguals use their languages differently.

- It may be more meaningful to consider the **relative** degree of '**dominance**' of one language or another

## 2. Relative language dominance in bilinguals

How might a bilingual speaker be 'unbalanced'?

- Adult learners may have more limited L2 experience
- Some people have a specific narrow competency
  - Example: someone who can only read in L2
- Even people who learned two Ls in childhood may:
  - use one more often than the other
  - feel more comfortable in one than the other
  - use the two in very different contexts

**Implications for research on 'bilinguals'?**

### 3. Heritage speakers

- What is a **heritage speaker**?

### 3. Heritage speakers

- Heritage speakers
  - Acquisition of first language was interrupted, or their first language is no longer dominant
  - Tend to have more native-like **phonology** than someone who starts learning as an adult
  - But typically not entirely native-like **syntax** (and may have a more limited **vocabulary**)
- This is a relatively new area of research in linguistics
  - Heritage speakers are a category of unbalanced bilingual — likely differ from other categories



### 3. Heritage speakers

- Example of morphology/syntax in a heritage speaker of Russian in the US ([Polinsky & Kagan 2007: 381](#))

Another tendency, especially with baseline languages that have an articulated system of oblique cases, is for the heritage language to have one generalized oblique case. In heritage Russian, for instance, in the plural, this case is the prepositional in *-ax*, which replaces the other oblique cases – compare the examples in (6). Intriguingly, a similar overgeneralization of the prepositional case is observed in Russian child language (Gvozdev 1961: 334) and in nonstandard dialects of Russian.

(6) Heritage vs. baseline Russian: oblique case marking in the plural

	<b>Heritage</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	
a.	bez rukav-ax without sleeve-PRP.PL	bez rukav-ov without sleeve-GEN.PL	‘without sleeves’
b.	mnogo stakan-ax many glass-PRP.PL	mnogo stakan-ov many glass-GEN.PL	‘many glasses’
c.	za skamejk-ax behind bench-PRP.PL	za skamejk-ami behind bench-INSTR.PL	‘behind the benches’
d.	dlja detj-ax for children-PRP.PL	dlja det-ej for children-DAT.PL	‘for children’

### 3. Heritage speakers

- For more on heritage speakers, see:

Benmammoun et al (2010), [summarized](#) at National Heritage Language Resource Center

- Some reasons why the situation can arise
- Some characteristics of the language of a heritage speaker
- Some implications for linguistic theory
- Some implications for language teaching

## 4. Diglossia

- What is diglossia?

## 4. Diglossia

- An entire community uses two language varieties
  - One at home, with families and friends — called the variety for ‘low’ functions (L)
  - One in official contexts, likely including school — called the variety for ‘high’ functions (H)
- Sometimes only the H variety is a written language

## 4. Diglossia

- Sometimes, H and L are closely related
  - Arabic — ‘Standard’ (H) and regional varieties (L)
  - Switzerland — ‘Standard’ (H) and Swiss (L) German
  - Many AAE speakers are diglossic with ‘S’AE
- But this is not always the case
  - Spanish/Guarani in Paraguay
  - English or French/local languages in parts of Africa
  - ...

## 4. Diglossia

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- Diglossic situations have implications for bilingualism research — how do we measure language ‘balance’ or language ‘dominance’?
  - Questions about how ‘often’ each language is spoken may not take context into account
  - Tests for determining which language is ‘dominant’ may look for the same vocabulary knowledge in both languages — but what if different subsets of vocabulary are known, because the two languages are used in different contexts?

## 5. Bilingualism and acquisition — online quiz!

- “Bilingualism quiz”

<http://bilingualmonkeys.com/what-do-you-know-about-bilingualism/>

- Caution: This is from a popular-audience site
- But at least the quiz questions are taken from Grosjean (2010) [cited by Kaplan in Ch 7]



## 6. Bilingualism: Individuals and societies

Kaplan (2016: 136):

...obviously, bilingual people don't exist in a vacuum. There are many reasons to be bilingual; the social context of bilingualism affects how, and how often, each language is used.

- What are the two broad patterns of “bilingual” societies that Kaplan discusses in sec 7.2?

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  - Bilingual societies of **monolingual** individuals
  - Bilingual societies of **bilingual** individuals

## 6. Bilingualism: Individuals and societies

- Bilingual societies of **monolingual** individuals
  - Two groups of speakers coexist, but each is relatively monolingual (e.g., French/English in Quebec, Flemish/French in Belgium)
  - These situations often reflect conflict (past or present) based on language differences
  - Bilingualism in some individuals may be 'asymmetrical' —  $L_a$  speakers may be more likely to know  $L_b$  than vice versa
- Related pattern: A society has two official languages, but one is much more rarely spoken (e.g., English/Irish in Ireland)

## 6. Bilingualism: Individuals and societies

- Bilingual societies of **bilingual** individuals
  - Diglossia (discussed above)
  - Linguistically diverse regions where for various social, political, economic reasons, people tend to know more than one language
    - . Local / regional / national languages
    - . Languages of nearby communities
  - Multilingual societies like these can differ greatly in how they view the relative value or prestige of different languages

## 7. Discussion

- Kaplan makes the point that the term **bilingual** can cover a whole range of situations
  - Different kinds of bilinguals may show different patterns of language dominance
- Why is it important to acknowledge this range of situations in bilingualism research?

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- Kaplan makes the point that the term **bilingual** can cover a whole range of situations
  - Different kinds of bilinguals may show different patterns of language dominance
- Why is it important to acknowledge this range of situations in bilingualism research?
  - Studies need to control for lg **dominance...** but how can that best be measured?
  - Are different **social factors** at play for different kinds of bilingualism?