The twofold importance of L2 learners in future studies on bilingualism: a new view on Multi-competence

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Can bilinguals, multilinguals and second language (L2) users be considered as a mean for crossing the boundaries between Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Neuroscience? In the frame of reference of Multi-competence (Cook, 2002) this presentation will highlight the twofold importance of L2 in future studies on bi- and multilingualism. On the one hand, studies conducted in a fractional and monolingual view (Grosjean, 2008) have provided evidence of the difference between monolinguals and bilinguals. A brief review on the cognitive and morphologic changes underlying the L2 user’s mind and brain will be presented. On the other hand, and in this issue relies the novelty of this overview, it will be shown that exploiting the awareness of the knowledge of L2 (Krashen, 2009) systems possessed by L2 users can increase the information on the peculiarities of the cognitive schemata (Gallese and Lakoff, 2005) underlying the diverse L2s. According to this evidence, L2 users might have a determining role in cooperating with neuroscientist in producing the stimuli necessary to monitor the neural substrates “that share commonalities with language” (Ullman, 2004 : 232). Longitudinal studies using neuroimaging on healthy L2 learners will provide information on the gradual impact that a L2 may have on the L2 user’s brain due to L2 learning process.


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