

Conceptual Transfer in Bilingual Speakers of Portuguese as L1 and English as L2

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Abstract

This article investigates the phenomenon of Conceptual Transfer in bilingual speakers of Portuguese as a first language (L1) and English as a second language (L2), through the analysis of multiple-choice tasks. The theoretical framework draws on the Bilingual Hierarchical Model proposed by Pavlenko, the principles of Linguistic Relativity, and the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, all of which emphasize the interplay between language and cognition. The research followed a mixed-methods quali-quantitative approach and examined the responses of 26 participants across eight conceptual domains: Objects, Emotions, person, gender, number, time, space, and movement. The findings reveal clear evidence of Conceptual Transfer both from L1 to L2 and from L2 to L1, suggesting that bilinguals do not merely switch between two separate linguistic systems, but rather reorganize concepts into an integrated and dynamic structure. Such results highlight that the bilingual mind functions as a unique conceptual system in which both languages interact continuously. This study contributes to the understanding of conceptual restructuring processes in bilinguals and underscores the importance of further research with Brazilian Portuguese in particular.

Keywords: Conceptual Transfer; Linguistic relativism; Bilingualism; Cognition; First and Second Language