



Title of Project:

Bilingualism and Cognitive Control: A Comparison
of Sequential and Simultaneous Bilinguals

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Project Summary:

It is well-documented that second and foreign language learners (L2) are able to keep pace with their monolingual peers when it comes to first language literacy development, while gaining an edge in cognitive processes such as metalinguistic awareness and interference control. The majority of studies on bilingual literacy and cognition examine two groups, i.e., simultaneous bilinguals (people who have been exposed to the two languages at home from birth or from a very early age) and monolinguals. The sequential bilinguals (people who acquire an L2 later in life) are often excluded in these studies due to the variation in their L2 proficiency profiles. Yet, it is precisely this population that makes up the majority of bilinguals in US, and particularly in public schools. My dissertation research includes two different groups of sequential bilinguals and compares their performance with simultaneous bilinguals. The sequential bilinguals are the immersion group (e.g., returned missionaries and study abroad students) and the foreign language group (traditional foreign language students). The purpose of the study is to examine whether or not sequential bilinguals enjoy the same cognitive advantages as simultaneous bilinguals. The current study uses a cross-sectional design to explore the cognitive processing differences among individuals with varied L2 proficiency levels and from different learning contexts. Data are collected through language background surveys and four well-established lab cognitive tasks. Findings from this study will help to clarify how factors such as age of acquisition and duration and intensity of instruction work together to affect learning outcomes.