

Successive bilinguals' language learning trajectories under the influence of changing balance of input

Kumru Uzunkaya-Sharma

(University of Vienna)

Keywords: Successive bilingual language development, heritage language maintenance, Turkish language tests, parental input, socio-economic differences

Successive Turkish-German bilingual children are frequently subjected to tests in the majority language German in Austria. However, recently developed assessment tools in Turkish reveal crucial insights regarding the successive bilingual child language development. Data exhibit clearly that the growth rate of bilingual language development fluctuates in both languages when under the influence of variations in the ratio of input. This suggests that conducting tests in both languages is imperative for obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the language proficiency of a successive bilingual child during transition from home day care to institutional day care.

An additional analysis of spontaneous speech data collected from 24 homes in Vienna demonstrates that language resources and family language policy have a significant impact on a child's learning speed in the heritage language and the majority language. Divergent outcomes suggest that differences in the amount and quality of language input in both languages influence a child's level of skills in the specific language.

Furthermore, parental educational backgrounds have a considerable impact on bilingual development. Between the initial (3,5 years) and second time data point (4,5 years), the children from homes with lower educational attainment, show a slower growth in their L2 compared to their peers from homes where at least one parent obtained a higher educational background. A parent who has a higher degree attained in the academic language German provides an input that leads consequently to a higher vocabulary growth curve in the majority language German early on.

Ultimately, growing up with two languages does not affect per se the size of vocabulary in each language, but input characteristics do contribute to the shifting balance of proficiency in the two languages over time.

Data for this thesis has been collected by the author in the INPUT project (<https://comparative-psycholinguistics.univie.ac.at/projects/input/english-abstract/>).

References

- Kazak-Berument, S. G., Ayşe (2010), *Türkçe İfade Edici ve Alıcı Dil Testi (TIFALDI)*. Istanbul: Türk Psikologlar Derneği.
- Topbaş, S., and Güven, S. (2013), *TEDİL Türkçe Erken Dil Gelişim Testi*. Ankara: Detay Yayıncılık.