The Effect of Linguistic Experience on a Non-Word Repetition Task: Testing Children with Little Exposure to their Second Language

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**INTRODUCTION**

- Non-word repetition tasks are useful in identifying SLI in monolinguals, but results for bilingual children are mixed (e.g., Thordardottir & Brandeker, 2013; Lee et al., 2003; Kohert et al., 2008; Windsor et al., 2010).
- The impact of language experience on NWR is unclear, in part because the phonological basis for stimuli construction is inconsistent or unclear (see Chat, 2013 for review).
- To reduce the effects of language experience, the LITMUS-NWR-FR items were built using phonemes common to many languages (COST Action IS0804).
- But sequential bilinguals with very little L2 input have not yet been reported using the LITMUS-NWR-French task.

**RESULTS**

Table 2. BI-IMRS French Standardized Test (N-EEL) Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean age</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BI-MRS</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>St. John’s, NL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BI-TD</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>Tours, France</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Note: Bilingual children are L1 English, L2 French. Data from France are from Ferré et al., (2015).

BI-MRS children began learning French in kindergarten in an immersion school. They were tested towards the end of 1st grade – between 16-20 months of exposure to French.

**DISCUSSION**

- Bi-IMRS = BI-TD for LITMUS-NWR-FR, with little individual variation.
- TD groups perform very well on this task, even when language exposure differs dramatically.
- What about other language combinations? TD bilinguals with other L1s (Turkish) and less exposure to French should be tested.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

- Special thanks to Sandrine Ferré and Christophe dos Santos from Inserm U910 Imagierie et Cerveau and the Université François-Rabelais de Tours for sharing their data with us.
- Thanks to parents, teachers, and children from Vanier Elementary, St. John’s, NL: Carol Ann Fagan, Tina Maloney and Victoria Kelly
- Student assistants at Memorial University: Alice Brun-Newhook and Camille Hellec
- Thanks to Dr. Yuan Rose for his technical support and suggestions.
- This research was supported by Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- This research is supported by the Dean of Arts and Vice President (Research) at Memorial University of Newfoundland under the Language Exposure and Syntactic Complexity in Child L2 French.

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**


**FUTURE RESEARCH**

- 20 test items, 10 control
- CV, CCV, CVC#
- Vowels: [a], [i], [u]
- Consonants: [p], [k], [f], [l]
- [kipafu], [tupla], [faku]

- 38 test items, 3 control
- Addition of [s] for complex consonant clusters
- Internal coda (s) and (l)
- [kusp], [skafu], [pa fuski], [plifu]

Ferré et al., (2015)

- TD bilinguals (L1 English, Arabic, Portuguese, Turkish) living in France had high scores M = 89%.
- Words with an internal coda were particularly challenging for children with SLI: Bi-SLI mean: 64%, Mo-SLI mean: 53%.

**BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVE**

**LITMUS-NWR-FRENCH** (Ferré et al., 2015)

- 20 test items, 10 control
- CV, CCV, CVC#
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- 38 test items, 3 control
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Objective: To expand on the results of Ferré et al. (2015) by administering this test to typically developing bilinguals (L1 English) with little exposure to French.

Prediction: Typically developing English-French bilingual children with varying language experience will nevertheless demonstrate similar performance because of the phonological properties of the items.

**METHODOLOGY**

- Bi-IMRS = Bi-TD groups perform very well on this task, even when language exposure differs dramatically.
- Recording by French speaker did not have any effect.

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