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# Treating phonological anomia using cognate-based therapy in a multilingual child with specific language impairment (SLI)

Maria Kambanaros\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CYPRUS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY – Cyprus

## Abstract

Recently word retrieval deficits were described in a single multilingual child (I.S.) with specific language impairment (SLI) for Bulgarian, English, and Greek, guided by theory-driven conceptualizations of the multilingual lexicon and word retrieval processing (Kambanaros, Michaelides & Grohmann, 2014). An equivalent picture naming task was used across languages. Word retrieval impairments were measured in relation to lexical factors of the target words and participant variables. The data were then compared to three groups of children: two groups of multilingual peers with typical language development (TLD), age-matched (n=6) and language-matched (n=6), and a group of children with SLI without a multilingual background (n=6). The results revealed that the lexical retrieval deficit manifested itself in all three languages. These findings strengthen previous claims that lexical retrieval deficits are comparable across languages and could potentially serve as a non-language specific clinical marker across different languages: Both storage and retrieval processes are assumed to underlie deficits retrieving words.

Following on from the assessment of the word retrieval impairment, the effects of cognate therapy to facilitate word retrieval were explored (Kambanaros, Michaelides & Grohmann, in submission). I.S. was trained over a one month period on 20 non-identical triple Bulgarian-English-Greek (BEG) cognates that shared meaning and phonological features (e.g., /camel/αμλα) in English, the proficient language, using a picture-based naming task. Cross-linguistic transfer effects were evident during and after therapy, and were maintained one month post intervention. The native language (Bulgarian) appeared to have benefitted more than the dominant language (Greek) from the treatment of cognate words in English but the difference was non-significant. Generalization to nontreatment words was evident only for English during and post intervention. Overall, cognates can be used as a vocabulary training strategy for multilingual children with SLI in the school setting.

## References

Kambanaros, M., Michaelides, M., & Grohmann, K.K (2014). Measuring word retrieval deficits in a multilingual child with SLI. Is there a better language? *Journal of Neurolinguistics*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jneuroling.2014.09.006>

Kambanaros, M., Michaelides, M., & Grohmann, K.K (in submission). Cross-linguistic transfer effects after cognate-based therapy in a case of multilingual Specific Language Impairment (SLI).

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\*Speaker