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# Lexical skills in Polish-Norwegian pre-schoolers

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## Abstract

Child multilingualism represents a common way of language development in Europe due to enhanced migration. Multilingual children are prone to have smaller vocabularies in one of their languages than do monolinguals (Bialystok, Luk, Peets & Yang, 2010). This is particularly apparent in unbalanced or successive bilinguals. Furthermore lexical processing can be slowed down in children acquiring more than one language (Bialystok, Craik & Luk, 2008). As a consequence bilingual children can be misdiagnosed with language impairment (Bedore & Peña, 2008). Thus, it is crucial to examine lexical abilities of bilingual children in both of their languages.

Participants of this study are 30 typically developing bilingual preschoolers with Polish as L1 and Norwegian as an early L2 (age: M=4;8; SD=0;9), and age-matched monolingual peers; 30 Polish and 30 Norwegian children. We use two new assessment tools: Cross-linguistic Lexical Tasks (CLTs) (Haman, Ĺuniewska & Pomiechowska, 2015) and Parental Bilingual Questionnaire (PABIQ) (COST Action IS0804, 2011; Tuller, 2015). Both tools are a part of the assessment battery Language Impairment Testing in Multilingual Settings (LITMUS) developed within the COST Action IS0804, which aimed to disentangle bilingualism and language impairment by improving the language assessment of minority language children (Armon-Lotem, de Jong, Meir, 2015).

CLTs comprise four parts: comprehension and production of nouns and verbs. The different CLTs versions are not translated, but constructed for each language separately, according to a set of rules based on each word's semantics, age of acquisition, and phonological and grammatical complexity. For both Polish and Norwegian a computer version of the tool is available. Here, all questions are prerecorded. Responses for comprehension are automatically registered along with reaction times (RT) via touch screen. For production, children's responses are recorded for later scoring and RT measurement.

PABIQ is an extensive questionnaire covering children's early development, current language skills, worries of language delay, use and richness of language, and the parents' socio-economic background. By combining CLTs and PABIQ, we study how the children's reported linguistic and socio-economic background is reflected in their word knowledge and lexical processing.

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For accuracy in CLTs, there is a ceiling effect in the monolinguals, whereas the bilingual scores are more spread and generally lower. Almost all the bilinguals score higher in Polish than in Norwegian. These results are reflected in the length of exposure to each language as reported in PABIQ ( $r=.74$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Concerning lexical processing, preliminary results from word comprehension show a significant difference in processing speed (RT) between nouns and verbs ( $W=987057$ ,  $p<0.005$ ), but not between mono- and bilinguals, or between languages in the early L2 learners.

In this talk, we focus on how the PABIQ results on reported early development, language use and socio-economic background correspond to the children's lexical skills and lexical processing as measured by the CLTs.

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