

Bilingualism and research studies in the class room

Claire Delle Luche

LaDeLi, Department of Language and
Linguistics

Early language acquisition

- In the womb: children hear the language(s) in their environment
- Neonates (Byers-Heinlein et al., 2010):
 - Preference for environment language (monolinguals and bilinguals)
 - Bilinguals: discrimination between their two environment language
- Cues for discrimination/separation of languages:
 - Rhythm (stress-timed, syllable-timed, mora-timed)
 - Syllable length



Language acquisition is variable

- Effect of language (Bleses et al., 2010): monolinguals

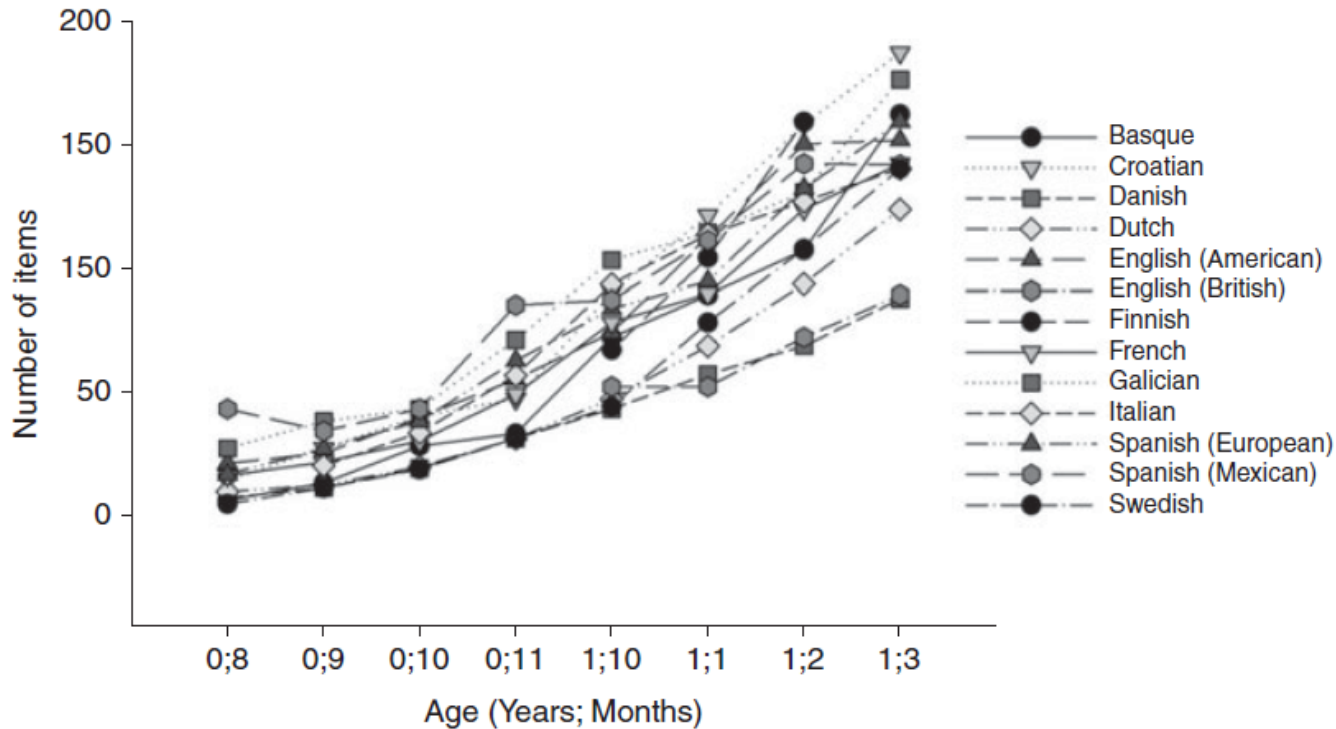


Fig. 1. Median number of words known reported by age and language.

Early bilingual acquisition

- Bilinguals are late to speak:
 - Amount of exposure effect (Thordardottir, 2011)
 - But no lateness for comprehension
- Code switching:
 - Frequent code switching impacts early vocabulary (Byers-Heinlein, 2013)
 - Yet it can have some positive effects (Floccia et al., submitted)
- Linguistic distance: learning English-Mandarin Chinese vs learning English-Dutch

Raising children multilingually

- Very common
- Can be highly successful
- Success dependent on a range of factors:
 - Child's need for the minority language
 - Social context
 - Linguistic environment
 - Individual child
 - etc...

Research studies in the class room

- Why?
- How?
 - Short interruption of the class
 - Engaging activities
- We run studies, but children are not “tested”:
 - No diagnosis is attempted
 - Positive feedback is always provided
- Ethical approval is strictly necessary
- A DBS is typically not necessary

Example with young children

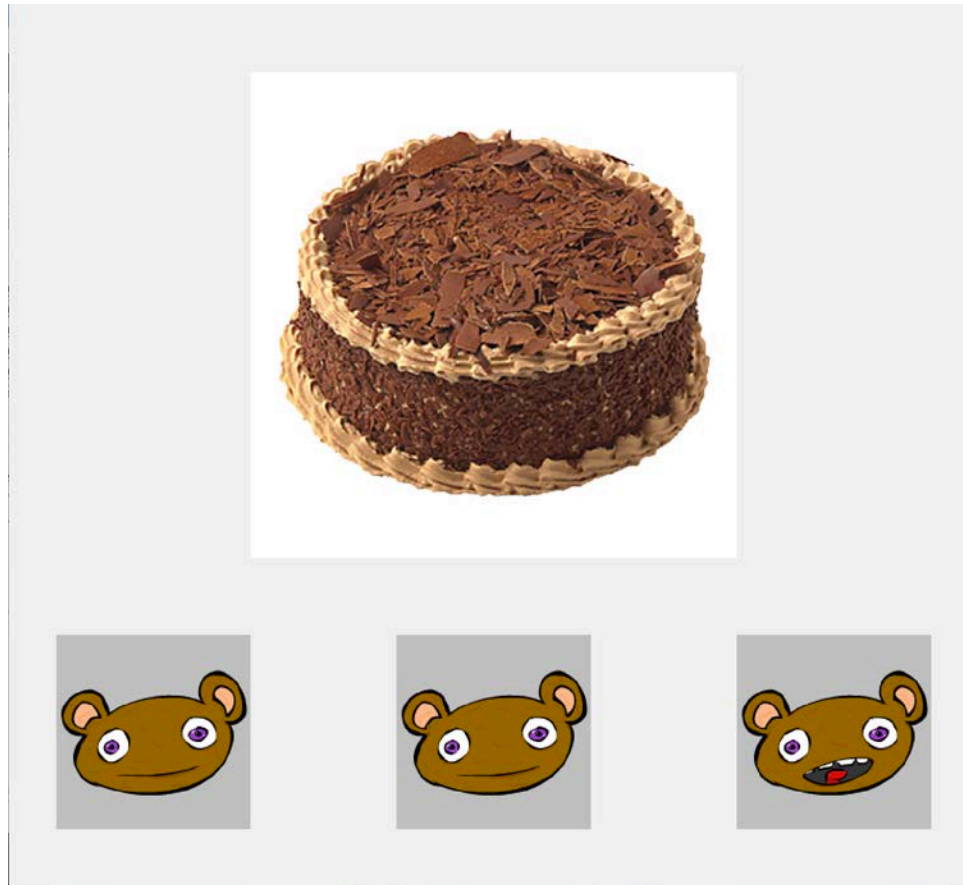
- Aim: impact of vocabulary size and working memory in mispronunciation detection
- Children have a specific representation of word sounds (cat as /k/ /æ/ /t/)
- Task difficulty: speech in noise is more difficult

Example with young children

- Three components:
 - Mispronunciation task
 - Working memory task (CTTOP, 1 subtest)
 - Vocabulary task (BPVS-III)

Example with young children

- Mispronunciation task



Cake! (no noise)

With noise:

Cake!

Gake!

Vake!

Example with young children

- Working memory task



1



2



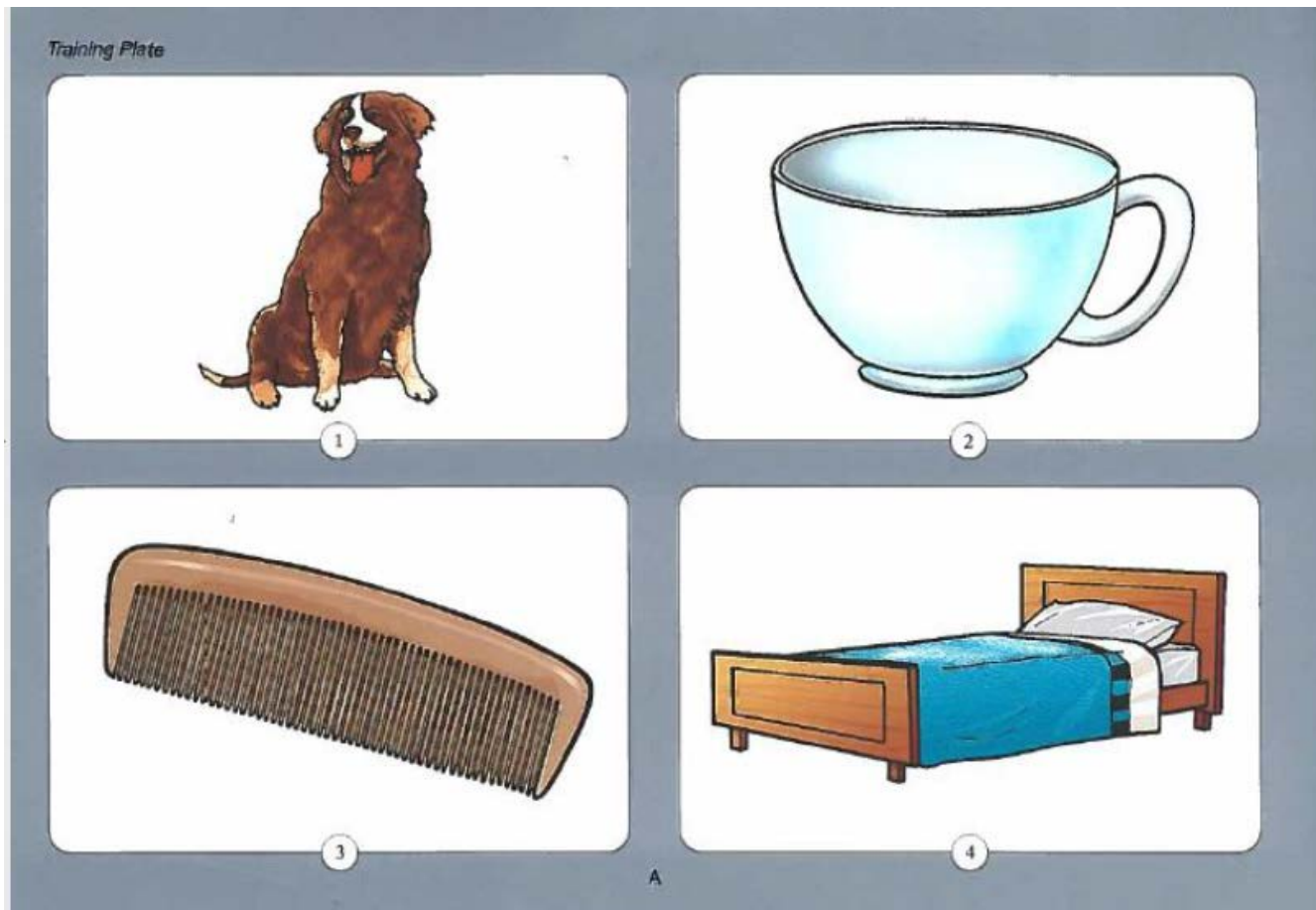
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Example with young children

- Vocabulary task



Example with young children

- Participants: year 1, 3 and 5
- Schedule: 2 visits of 15min
- Reward: certificate with stickers

Example with older children

- Study by Coralie Hervé
- Aim: for bilingual children, do languages interact at the morphosyntactic level?
- Is there a cross-linguistic influence in children's use of determiners?

Bird can fly.

** Oiseaux peuvent voler.*

Les oiseaux peuvent voler.

Example with older children

- Method: self-paced reading

The -----
--- reporter ---
--- who -----
--- the -----
--- senator -----
--- attacked -----
--- admitted ---
--- the -----
--- error.

The reporter who the senator attacked admitted the error.

Example with older children

- Two contexts:
 - Generic:
 - Grammatical: *In general, birds can fly but penguins cannot.*
 - Ungrammatical: *In general, birds can fly but the giraffes cannot.*
 - Specific:
 - Grammatical: *On John's farm the dogs are friendly, but the ducks are not.*
 - Ungrammatical: *On John's farm the dogs are friendly, but lions are not.*

We need your help!

- If you are happy to participate, please contact LaDeLi (our research group on language development):
- langdevcentre@essex.ac.uk
- We are happy to give talks to pupils, parents or the school team

Thank you for your attention



Any questions?