

Margaret Kehoe

Seeking cross-linguistic interaction in the phonetic and phonological development of bilingual French-speaking children.

This study focuses on three different areas of phonetic-phonological development (Voice Onset Time, syllable structure, and word prosody) in monolingual and bilingual French-speaking children, aged 2;6 to 6;0 years. The aim of the study is to determine whether bilinguals differ from monolinguals and if so, can differences be explained by the phonological characteristics of the bilinguals' home languages. Specifically, we examine whether bilingual children produce target voiceless stops with longer VOTs and target voiced stops with less lead voicing than monolingual children; whether they show delay or acceleration in the acquisition of word-final codas and clusters, and whether they exhibit different duration and f<sub>0</sub> ratios between stressed and unstressed syllables in their disyllabic word productions than monolinguals. Results show evidence of cross-linguistic interaction in the youngest set of children (aged 2;6) in the area of syllable structure and word prosody. These effects were only marginally present in the older children. There were no monolingual-bilingual differences in VOT at any age. In the discussion, we consider why certain areas of phonetic-phonological development are more susceptible to cross-linguistic influence than others and consider the relevance of the results for models of cross-linguistic interaction.