

Linguistic complexity in bilingual children's grammars

Bilingual children have often been shown to have lower language proficiency when compared with monolingual children. Studies which show this difference usually examine bilingual children's use of inflectional morphology (including gender, clitics etc.) and vocabulary skills. In my presentation I will report on some data showing that syntactic complexity measures point to some qualitative differences between bilingual and monolingual children's production although the evidence for less complex structures in bilingual production is rather limited. Tracking reference is also a complex phenomenon requiring the interaction of lexical, syntactic and discourse constraints. The use of referential forms in bilingual speakers' production has also been suggested to indicate limitations in processing resources; I will report on recent findings showing that linguistic properties (crosslinguistic influence and dominance) affect the use of over- and under-specified forms in bilingual production rather than limitations in cognitive resources as such.