

Pausing and disfluencies in bilingual children's speech

There are contradictory findings in the literature regarding the fluency of bilingual children's speech. According to some literature, there is no difference in the frequency of disfluencies compared to monolinguals, while others say that disfluencies are more common in bilinguals. The type of two languages, the type of bilingualism, the complexity of the utterances, and the type of disfluencies may also be decisive. In addition to disfluencies, pausing strategies (the frequency, proportion, and length of silent pauses) also reveal speech planning difficulties. However, very few studies have addressed the fluency of speech in bilingual children. The questions of our presentation are the following: 1) Examining speech fluency in Hungarian-English bilingual children, what are the differences (if any) between the two languages regarding speech fluency and pausing strategies? 2) Comparing the Hungarian speech of the bilingual children to those of Hungarian monolingual children, what are the differences (if any) between them? Fourteen Hungarian-English early sequential bilingual children (aged between 6 and 8) and fourteen Hungarian monolingual control speakers matched in age and gender participated in the study. Spontaneous narratives about their own lives were recorded with all participants. Silent pauses and disfluencies were annotated in the speech samples, and duration of pauses were measured. The annotations and measurements were carried out by Praat. After that the frequency of pauses and disfluencies were calculated, and types of disfluencies were examined. Results show that there are differences between bilingual and monolingual children's speech in the frequency and duration of pauses, and the frequency of disfluencies. In bilingual children, there were differences between the two languages in all analyzed parameters. The results help us better understand speech production processes in bilingual children.

Keywords: bilingual children, speech fluency, disfluencies, pausing, spontaneous speech

Number of words: 300