

Kurz-AG 3:

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### **Language Profiles in Turkish Children with Developmental Language Disorders: Case studies**

The purpose of this study is to investigate and compare the language profiles of children with developmental language disorders. Conversational language samples were collected from 3 children with developmental language disorders. Language sample measures provides valuable information regarding children's performances in the areas of lexical diversity, morphosyntax and utterance formulation. Language samples were analyzed with Turkish SALT (Acarlar, F., Miller, J. F. & Johnston, J. R., 2006) and compared to the Turkish Reference Database. Language profiles for all three children will be presented and discussed.

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### **Crosslinguistic characteristics of Specific Language Impairment – a comparison of German and Korean children with SLI**

Crosslinguistic studies of Specific Language Impairment (SLI) help to identify universal hallmarks of SLI as well as vulnerable areas, which may be influenced by structural characteristics of the native language. The present study focuses on naming and comprehension of nouns and verbs in German and Korean children with (and without) SLI. Given that the German and Korean languages differ with respect to the clarity of the noun-verb distinction and the saliency of nouns and verbs, crosslinguistic differences in the acquisition of word categories and differential patterns of verb vulnerability might be expected. Participants were 10 German and 10 Korean SLI-children, and two age-matched control groups. The method was a picture naming task (28 object and 28 action pictures as target stimuli) and a word comprehension task. Effects of language (German/Korean), group (SLI/controls), word class (noun/verb) and modality (comprehension/production) were investigated. The results indicate strong language-general profiles: in both languages, SLI children's lexical abilities are significantly below age-appropriate levels. Their problems are most evident in the naming condition, e.g., word production is more severely impaired than word comprehension. However, nouns and verbs were affected similarly; the findings do not support a selective verb deficit.

In addition, exploratory data of unimpaired bilingual children (German/Korean) are presented, who were tested with the noun-verb naming task. Their results are discussed in relation to those of the language-impaired and typically developing monolingual children.

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### **Language-specific and language-universal traits of SLI in Croatian**

An overview of SLI research in Croatian in the last 15 years reveals characteristic traits of language behavior in SLI children concerning morphology and lexicon. The research was oriented towards defining language-specific characteristics of SLI that depended on known typological traits of Croatian. As Croatian is a morphologically rich language, commission

errors are much more frequent than omissions, especially in noun paradigms. Further on, as the number of different paradigms is big (8 verbal 3 nominal macro-classes with different number of classes within each) generalizations across different paradigms are characteristic for language acquisition both in children with typical language development and children with SLI. However, the pattern of generalizations is different with SLI children being less systematic and having more diverse generalizations.

This sort of behavioral research provides detailed picture of SLI in Croatian, but says nothing about possible background mechanisms that lie behind language acquisition in the typical and impaired population. Recently, neurocognitive research using event-related potentials has been used in the research of SLI. The initial ERP studies reveal that SLI children lack dissociations (in neuropsychological sense) of various aspects of grammar, dissociations that can be observed in adults and, to some extent, in children with TLD. This can be interpreted as a difference in the developmental course, which leads to greater specialization and modularization of language function in TLD children, but not in children with SLI.

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### **A richer morphology helps: A comparison of French and Slovenian children with normal language and specific language impairment.**

**Background.** Children with specific language impairment (SLI) present significant problems in establishing thematic relations in sentence comprehension, especially when they depend on the appreciation of the hierarchical structure signaled by syntax. We report a cross-linguistic investigation of French- and Slovenian-speaking children with SLI focusing on the role of word-order and grammatical morphology on thematic role assignment..

**Method.** Forty French and Slovene monolingual children were tested. The two groups of ten French and ten Slovene children with SLI were selected and carefully matched for age and severity of language impairment (M=10y, range 8-12). For each group ten normally developing children (monolingual French and Slovene) were matched on receptive vocabulary (M=8y). An auditory sentence judgment task was used. In the crucial condition (number constraint) the subject noun phrase was plural and agreed with the verb while the direct object was singular. This condition was contrasted with a condition where both subject and object were singular. E.g.:

1. Correct: the mailman brought the letter.
2. Reversible thematic violation: the letter brought the mailman.
3. Number constraint violation: the letters brought(pl) the mailman.

**Results.** There was a main effect of group, with Slovene children performing overall better than French children. Normal children were better in refusing the incorrect sentences when there was number agreement. Finally, French children with SLI failed to show the same advantage, while Slovenian children with SLI largely benefited from the number agreement.

**Conclusions.** In the Slovenian language, morpho-syntax plays a fundamental role in thematic role assignment because of case marking. Interestingly, though number agreement is the same in French and Slovenian, only Slovenian children with SLI seem to benefit from it. These data suggest that children with SLI are indeed able to use grammatical information to assign thematic roles when grammatical information is crucial in the language they learn.

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## **Symptoms of SLI in Turkish-Dutch bilingual children**

Studies of SLI in the context of successive bilingualism face a major challenge: information about the specifics of monolingual SLI in the first language (L1) is often lacking. The implication is that a comparison between bilingual children with and without language impairment in the immigrant country may constitute a first exploration of SLI symptoms in L1.

To demonstrate such an exploration, in this presentation we will show results of comparative research on Turkish grammatical morphology in bilingual children with and without SLI (both groups consists of 6;0-8;0-year olds). The data comprise:

- (1) responses on a number of elicitation tasks, dealing with:
  - a. subject-verb agreement
  - b. agreement in the genitive-possessive construction
  - c. accusative marking in two obligatory contexts, determined by word order and definiteness, respectively
- (2) responses on a grammatical judgment task addressing accusative marking
- (3) grammatical morpheme productions in a narrative sample, elicited by the Frog Story

The aim of the study is to establish whether these grammatical morphemes appear to be vulnerable in Turkish (the L1). The results show differences between the impaired children and their typically developing age peers. These differences pinpoint some domains that may also be weak in monolingual Turkish children with SLI.

The data from the L1 are indicative grammatical morphemes that may constitute obstacles in monolingual SLI in Turkish, but our subjects are bilingual. In order to further assess the children's impairment status, indices of SLI in L1 are complemented by indirect information about the children's impairment (based on parents' responses to a questionnaire) and by production data from their L2 (Dutch).

Finally, it will be shown that for some of the linguistic variables, Turkish in the Netherlands shows differences from the Turkish spoken in Turkey. Such language changes must be accounted for when examining L1 in bilinguals.

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## **Language profiles of bilingual Turkish children with/without SLI**

Up to now, only few studies deal with the language proficiency of language disordered Turkish children in both monolingual and bilingual environments. However, comparatively less studies focus on the outcome of Specific Language Impairment (SLI) in Turkish speaking children (Topbaş 2006).

Two recent studies confirm the assumption that SLI affects Turkish morphology, as it has been reported for other languages (Leonard 1998). Babur et al. (2007) for instance show that Turkish-German successive bilingual children with SLI (bSLI) produce errors in the production of Turkish case morphemes whereas normally developing Turkish-German successive bilinguals (bND) at the same age do not. Equal findings have been reported for a Turkish child in a monolingual environment (Topbaş, 2007).

The present paper deals with the questions related to the diagnosis of SLI in bilingual children. We investigate spontaneous speech data from successive bilingual children (2;5-6;5 years) with and without SLI and compare their language production to profiles from 140 monolingual Turkish children (mL1). The data provided in this Turkish SALT analysis tool (Turkish Psychological Association, 2007) generates a documentation of language profiles

and allows a cross-group comparison. Both quantitative and qualitative aspects of language production will be analyzed.

We will show that successive-bilingual Turkish-German ND children show no difference in their L1 language production if they are compared to age matched mL1 children. We conclude that this finding may be due to the intensive L1 language use up to the age of three. Furthermore, our study provides evidence for SLI in bilingual children. As it can be interpreted from the language profiles of the bSLI children, a clear difference with respect to different characteristics in language use can be found between the bSLI on the one and the mL1 and the bND children on the other hand.

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### **Motion verbs in Greek and German: Evidence from typically developing and SLI children**

Motion verbs in German and Greek encode directional and locative readings using Case and Aspect respectively. German motion verbs encode direction with an ACC-marked PP while location involves a DAT-marked PP (cf. 1). In Greek, motion verbs prototypically encode direction in the perfective aspect and location in the imperfective (cf. 2). However, unlike German where the distinction between direction and location in terms of case gives rise to grammaticality effects, the Greek aspectual options reflect strong preferences. In both languages, the PP is a complement in directional events and an adjunct in locative ones (cf. Zubizarreta & Oh 2007).

- (1) Der Wurm kriecht in die / der Tasse.  
the worm crawls in the-ACC / the-DAT cup
- (2) To puli petakse / petuse sto klivi.  
the bird flew-PERF.3s / flew-IMP.3s in(to)-the cage

The data from each language is collected through a production task using short video clips, which depict locative and directional motion events. In both languages, we tested adult native speakers as well as 5-6-year-old typically developing and SLI children.

Greek typically-developing and SLI children show more target production with locative as opposed to directional videos. The SLI group performs significantly worse than the control children in the videos describing both locative and directional events. Moreover, the SLI children rely more on lexical means to express locative and directional events than on grammatical means, such as the aspectual form of the verb.

On the other hand, all German groups show more target production with directional (ACC-marked PPs) than locative (DAT-marked PPs) videos. The difference between the two video types is more pronounced in the SLI group, in which DAT-marked PPs are almost non-existent. Moreover, the SLI children tend to omit PPs when describing locative events. Our findings will be discussed in relation to crosslinguistic differences and current approaches to SLI.

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### **Substitution of prepositions as an indicator of SLI in bilingual children: The relative contribution of representation and processing**

Prepositions are a locus for code interference in bilingual populations, but are not necessarily considered an indicator of Specific Language Impairment (SLI). This paper studies the use of two types of prepositions, adverbial prepositions (locative and temporal) and obligatory prepositions (dative and oblique) by SLI bilingual English-Hebrew preschool children. Subjects were 10 bilingual SLI children, referred by speech clinicians and placed in "Language Preschools", who scored lower than 1.5 SD below the norm in both languages on standardized tests. They are compared with 15 typically developing (TD) bilinguals from the same neighborhood, who attend regular preschools and scored within the norm in both languages. Data were collected using an elicited imitation task. Subjects were asked to repeat 24 sentences, in each language, 10 containing prepositions which are used in adverbials (PP-adv), and 14 containing prepositions which are governed by the verb (PP-verb).

We argue that while code interference is not a unique feature of SLI, the unsystematic substitution errors are unique to SLI. Substitutions of prepositions governed by the verb by SLI children show that they know the theta-grid for each verb and therefore know that a preposition is needed (Botwinik-Rotem 2004), but do not know which preposition it is. Thus they pick up any preposition, with preference for *in* and *on*, the semantics of which is less restricted. Substitutions of adverbial prepositions by SLI children show again that they know that a preposition is needed from the semantics of the adverbial, rather than from the theta-grid. Since no mapping of theta-roles is involved, the semantics of the adverbial helps the child choose the correct preposition, and thus there are fewer errors. These substitution errors can be related to a general impairment in procedural memory (Ullman et al, 2005) rather than in declarative memory, and are therefore manifested in the same way in both languages, despite the typological differences between English and Hebrew.