

Effects of Bilingualism on Child Cognitive and Linguistic Abilities

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Gisel Martinez

Kent State University

Bilingualism has been shown to be related to language and cognitive abilities, such that individuals who speak two or more languages frequently receive higher scores on measures of these constructs. Gibson (2012) found that bilingual children performed on par with monolingual children when it came to receptive language but had worse scores when it came to the expressive language (Gibson, 2012). Poulin (2010) found that bilingual children out performed monolingual children in cognitive flexibility (Poulin, 2010). In previous studies, children observed were of the preschool age and older. The question becomes when can linguistic and cognitive advantages be observed in children; we hypothesize that advantages can start to emerge before the age of 2. In this study, there were 149 mother/child pairs (children all at 18 months old, mothers were mostly of Puerto Rican decent); they were split into three groups based off the primary language that the mothers talked to the children: Spanish, English, and mixed (a combination of English and Spanish). Across the three groups, the children performed the same on cognitive tasks and receptive language abilities as measured by the Bayley Scales of Infant Development (BSID-III). For expressive language, the Spanish group received lower scores than both the mixed-language and English groups. This study is important to expand the research into the study the effects of Spanish on language and cognitive abilities by looking at a sample of children at the age of the emergence of language.

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Works Cited:

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