

CBS Research Seminar

Language support or therapy? How to disentangle bilingual insufficiency from language impairment

Presented by

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ABSTRACT

Bilingual children need up to five years of L2 exposure to reach a level of language proficiency adequate for academic performance, i.e. understanding basic tasks in kindergarten/elementary school (Tucker, 1999). Walters et al. (2014) and also other studies show that by the time children enter school (after 2-3 years of L2 exposure), a third of typically developing (TD) bilingual children still score below monolingual norms, and most of those who score within norms are still below the monolingual mean. Some of these children show an atypical language acquisition pattern, which – on the surface – is similar to monolingual Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). These children are often examined by the tests normed for monolingual children and therefore are often misdiagnosed. Seeking the possibility to adequately assess bilinguals with language problems, a number of tests for bilingual children were developed (e.g. the COST Action IS0804 created Language Impairment Testing in Multilingual Settings test battery (Armon-Lotem et al. 2015)). Additionally, there is a long tradition of using repetition tasks in the bilingual population to identify DLD. Growing research on Sentence Repetition (SR) in bilingual acquisition showed that SR can be an accurate indicator for identifying bilingual DLD (Thordardottir & Brandeker 2013, Chiat et al. 2013). The so-called non-word repetition can also help identify DLD in bilinguals.

The talk will provide an overview of the recently developed instruments for testing bilingual preschool and primary school children, discuss the studies on bilingual children with DLD and summarize the latest findings on bilingual DLD.