

THE EFFECTS OF INPUT, LITERACY & UPDATING ON VOCABULARY GROWTH OF SEQUENTIAL BILINGUALS

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates whether the vocabulary growth of sequential bilingual children with Greek as their home language and German as the language of the community is predicted by the input and literacy that they receive and, also, by their cognitive (i.e. updating) abilities. Previous studies have found that language input of both home and community are important for vocabulary growth. Similarly, more recent studies have manifested the role of literacy in both languages (bilitracy) as a crucial factor for both vocabulary and general language development. In addition, the impact of cognitive abilities on vocabulary growth have been also verified in numerous studies. The current study aims to consider all the aforementioned factors by testing fifty-eight children aged 8 to 12 years, who live in Germany, by means of a child questionnaire, two expressive vocabulary tests (in Greek and in German, respectively) and an updating task. The findings reveal differences in participants' performance in both vocabulary tasks; hence vocabulary knowledge is more width in Greek compared to German. Interestingly, regression analyses have shown that input, literacy practices in both languages and cognitive (i.e. updating) skills predict bilinguals' vocabulary knowledge in both Greek and German. The findings suggest that (a) not only input in both languages, but also bilitracy, should be promoted and (b) updating skills are required for a successful vocabulary development.

Keywords: Vocabulary growth, sequential bilinguals, input, literacy, updating.