

THE EFFECTS OF UPDATING AND PROFICIENCY ON OVERSPECIFICATION IN AMERICAN-GREEK CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to understand which factors contribute to the production of overspecified forms in American-Greek children. The children were between the ages of 8 and 12, with Chicago as their area of residence. All attended monolingual English schools and received support in their heritage language only during the weekends. Previous studies on bilingual children have shown that overspecification is either driven from a crosslinguistic effect or from lower vocabulary skills in the non-dominant language. In addition, the impact of cognitive abilities (i.e. working memory) on overspecification have been verified in some recent studies. The present study analyses reference use in Greek in the context of a narrative elicitation task, while at the same time a number of screening tasks were taken into account such as home language history and current language use via questionnaires, proficiency and updating skills. The results revealed that weak updating skills were the most significant predictor of the production of overinformative forms. The study aims to shed new light on the phenomenon of overspecification in bilingual children's production and to shift the emphasis to the non linguistic factors (such as executive functions).

Keywords: Bilingualism, overspecification, updating skills.