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Age of Bilingual Exposure Predicts Distinct Contributions of Phonology and Semantic Knowledge to Successful Reading Development

Kaja K. Jasinska^{1,2,3} and Laura-Ann Pettito^{1,2,3}

ABSTRACT

How do bilingual children learn to read when they face phonological and semantic processing across two languages?

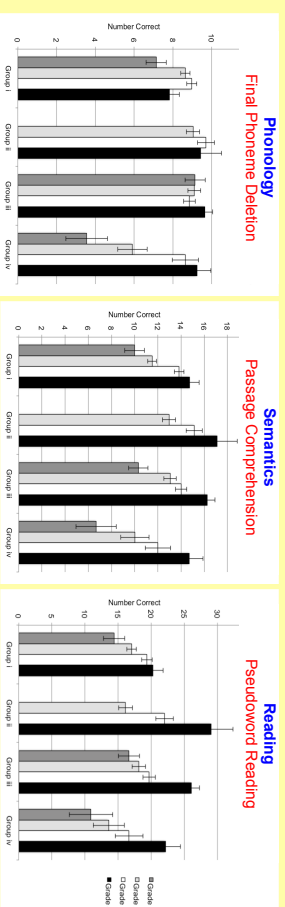
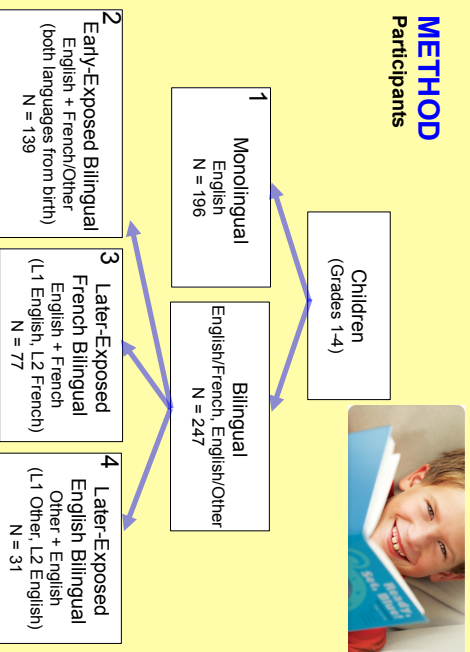
Phonological awareness (awareness of and ability to manipulate phonological units) and semantic knowledge (vocabulary) support skilled reading in monolinguals^{1,2}. Yet, phonology and semantics contribute to reading on a different maturational timetable, with preferential sensitivity to phonology among early readers and **Question: Is this true for the young bilingual reader?**

Bilingual exposure and the age of first bilingual language exposure impact phonological awareness and semantic knowledge and subsequent reading ability²⁻⁶. Early-exposed bilinguals show a language and literacy advantage in phonological awareness, semantic knowledge and reading^{5,6}

NEW: Structural Equation Modeling revealed distinct contributions of phonology and semantics to reading among early-exposed vs later-exposed bilinguals as compared to monolinguals
 The age of first bilingual language exposure is a potent predictor of how bilingual children best learn to read

METHOD

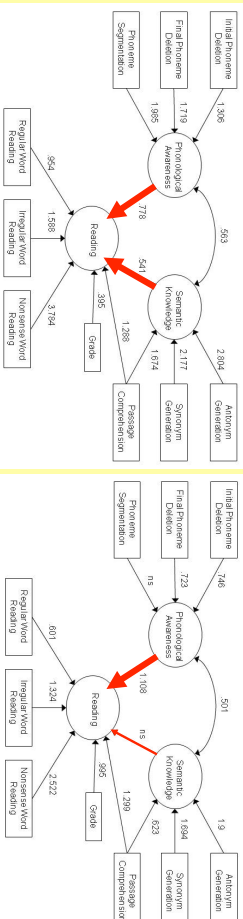
Participants



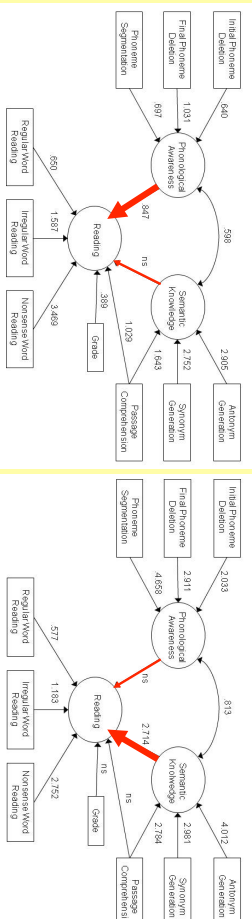
Age of Bilingual Exposure Impacts Phonology and Semantics

RESULTS

Phonology and Semantics Differentially Contribute to Reading Monolinguals



Later-Exposed French Bilingual



CONCLUSION

Early language experience has important consequences for how a child learns to read
 Specific parts of language knowledge and their contribution to reading mastery are altered as a result of early monolingual or dual language experience & age of exposure



Beyond a "bilingual cognitive advantage," exposure to two languages provides children with a "bilingual language & literacy advantage," that, in turn, drives the higher cognitive advantage

Supports Bilingual Language and Literacy Advantage Hypothesis²⁻⁶

Translational Impact
 A young bilingual reader may benefit from reading instruction focusing on **phonological** processing in their earliest-exposed language, but may benefit most from reading instruction focusing on **semantic** knowledge in their later-exposed language

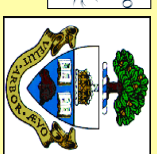


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*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Laura-Ann Pettito@gallaudet.edu
 www.pettito.gallaudet.edu
 Visual Language & Visual Learning, VL2
 Brain & Language Laboratory, BL2



Task
 English Language and Reading Battery⁷
Measuring Phonology, Semantics, and Reading Ability
Analysis
 Structural Equation Modeling