

Review of the doctoral dissertation of Joanna Kołak

Language environment and vocabulary development of the Polish-English bilingual children in the United Kingdom and Ireland (2020)

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General comments

The thesis is well-presented; well-structured and coherent.

The thesis, consisting of 6 chapters and appendices is well balanced and has sufficient range and depth. It starts with an introduction and a broad overview of the factors influencing vocabulary size in bilingual children (chapter 1), followed by chapter 2 on the factors that shape the language environment of bilingual children and the various benefits of bilingualism for the children. Chapter 3 explains the general methodology used to investigate the language environment and vocabulary size of Polish-English bilingual children. Chapter 4 presents the methods and results from study 1, namely the identification of early and late predictors of vocabulary size of Polish-English bilingual children. Chapter 5 presents the methods and results from study 2, namely the qualitative analysis of language environment in the families of the Polish-English bilingual children. Chapter 6 brings all the main findings together, draws conclusions about methodologies, highlights limitations and makes suggestions for further research. There is no separate concluding chapter. There is also detailed a bibliography and appendices with the instruments used in the studies.

The research fits perfectly within early multilingualism research, using methodologies from psycholinguistics.

Parts of it would be highly suitable for publication in an appropriate academic journal.

This is an excellent, original and interesting combination of quantitative and qualitative work.

The literature review is very good. Previous research is presented appropriately and critically.

The research questions are original and well-formulated.

The key concepts are well defined and explained.

There is sufficient self-reflection and justification for the methodological choices.

The research designs for the two complementary studies are excellent. The inclusion of a longitudinal design is judicious. The use of established instruments adds to the potential replicability of the study. Collecting data from both children and parents allows for triangulation.

The sample sizes and the amount of data gathered is sufficient to answer the research questions.

The quantitative analyses are based on standard statistical techniques that have been carried out accurately and meticulously.

The qualitative analyses (thematic analyses) are extensive and solid.

The results are well interpreted.

Proper implications are drawn from the findings.

The discussion is very good, including limitations and suggestions for further research.

To conclude, the approach to the subject of the study shows that the candidate has an excellent insight into methodological and theoretical issues in the field of early multilingualism. Overall, the work and its recommendations are an original contribution to the field of multilingualism and applied linguistics.

In my opinion the thesis meets internationally recognised standards for the conduct and presentation of research in the field of applied linguistics and is satisfactory for the award of the doctoral degree.

Specific comments

p. 211: Eleven parents (55%) => avoid using exact percentages for such small number

p. 302: Further directions: => I would have loved a wider range here.

Questions

- 1) What is the main original contribution of your work?
- 2) We hear the voices of the parents but not the children: do you think these could have added something to the study?
- 3) Do you think the use of brain-imaging techniques could be used in early multilingualism research?
- 4) If you were to redo this research, would you do anything differently?
- 5) Could you imagine new ways to investigate emotional resonance (in an ideal world?)
- 6) Were you surprised by any of your results (if so: why, and what was surprising)?

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Dewaele', written in a cursive style.

Date: 07/10/2020

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