

Early lexical development of French-Portuguese bilingual children: a CDI-adaptation study



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INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the lexical development of 29 French-Portuguese bilingual children. We used the for both languages parental reports: The F-CDI for French and the P-CDI for Portuguese. They are adaptations of the M-CDI (Mac-Arthur Bates Communicative Development Inventories).

QUESTIONS

1. Do monolinguals out perform our bilinguals in vocabulary acquisition between 24 and 30 month old ?
2. Do our bilinguals have a larger vocabulary size in one of their language ?
3. Do our bilinguals have a different grammatical distribution as their monolinguals peers ?
4. Do our bilinguals have a different grammatical distribution in their two languages ?

DATA COLLECTION

- F-CDI and P-CDI don't share the same number of items (690 vs 853)
- F-CDI and P-CDI don't share the same number of items per grammatical categories (SEAS&GR = Sound Effects and Animal Sounds & games and routines; CCI = Closed Class Items)
- Using only items shared in both F-CDI and P-CDI is a way to compare both dataset

	SEAS&GR	CCI	Nouns	Predicates	Total
F-CDI	39 (5.7%)	105 (15.2%)	379 (54.9%)	167 (24.2%)	690
P-CDI	55 (6.5%)	140 (16.4%)	476 (55.8%)	182 (21.3%)	853
Shared items	15 (3,4%)	71 (16.0%)	268 (60.3%)	90 (20.3%)	444

METHODOLOGY

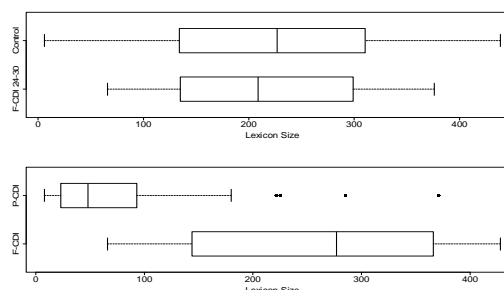
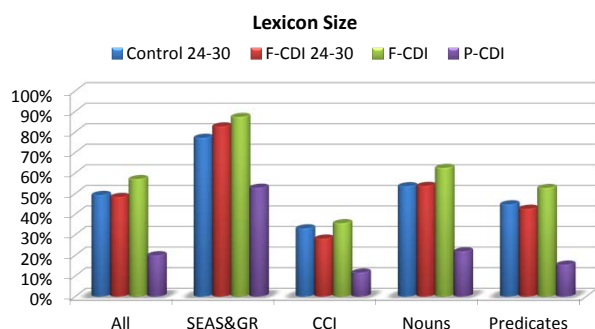
- For the study, we only selected normal developing children who have at least one parent speaking European Portuguese on a regular basis.
- Children excluded: preterm, multiple birth children, born in Portugal
- French is the dominant language (Freq. of exp.: 0 = never to 4 = always)
- A group of French monolinguals is used as control group

N	Age range (in months)	Mean age (SD)	Freq. of French exposure (SD)	Freq. of Portuguese exposure (SD)
29	24-36	30.4 (4.0)	3.93 (0.26)	3.31 (0.81)
17	24-30	27.4 (1.9)	3.88 (0.33)	3.24 (0.83)
12	31-36	34.9 (1.7)	4.00 (0.0)	3.42 (0.79)
288	24-30	26.3 (2.1)	N.A.	N.A.

PARTICIPANTS

RESULTS

% OF WORD PRODUCED BY WORD CLASS

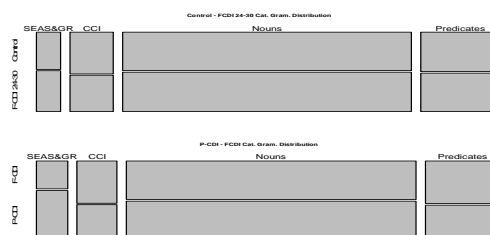


DISTRIBUTION BY WORD CLASS

Group	SEAS&GR	CCI	Nouns	Predicates
Control 24-30	5.28%	10.73%	65.58%	18.41%
F-CDI 24-30	5.77%	9.30%	67.05%	17.87%
F-CDI	5.17%	9.98%	66.12%	18.73%
P-CDI	9.17%	8.35%	67.02%	15.46%

No difference ($\chi^2 = 4.50, p = 0.21$)

Different ($\chi^2 = 58.06, p < 0.01$)



1. **NO:** No significant difference between the control group and the group of bilinguals between 24 and 30 month old
2. **YES:** Highly significant difference between the number of words produced in the F-CDI and the P-CDI
3. **NO:** No significant difference when comparing the class word distribution of the control group with the matching bilinguals
4. **YES:** Highly significant difference between the French word grammatical distribution and the Portuguese word grammatical distribution

Discussion: The French-Portuguese bilinguals of this study don't exhibit any lexical development delay compared to their monolingual French peers but they show a better knowledge of French than Portuguese. However, their total vocabulary (French + Portuguese) exceeds the vocabulary of monolinguals. The distribution of grammatical categories is the same between the control group and the French vocabulary of bilinguals but this distribution is different between the French and the Portuguese vocabulary of bilinguals. We hypothesize that Portuguese is not as developed as French. It could be one of the reasons that would explain why bilinguals have so few CCI in Portuguese.

Next step? An analysis of the variable linked with the words (e.g. phonological complexity, frequency of use, neighborhood density...) would explain why some of the words in French and Portuguese are always acquired and others not.

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