

Comparing the Performance of Bilingual Children with Developmental Language Disorder and Typical Development on Sentence Repetition: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Background: Over the past decade, researchers have compared the performance of bilingual children with developmental language disorder (DLD) to those with typical development (TD) using the Sentence Repetition Task (SRT) in order to assess language abilities. Thus far, no systematic review has examined how these two populations differ on the SRT.

Aims: To compare the performance of bilingual children with DLD and those with TD on their first (L1) and second (L2) language SRT results, and to investigate the impact of participant characteristics on the results.

Method: A systematic search of seven electronic databases (PubMed, Scopus, PsycINFO, CINAHL, LLBA, ERIC and Dissertations and Theses) on 31 January 2022 yielded 2,573 records. Studies which assessed bilingual children with TD and DLD on the SRT were included. Risk of bias was assessed using the modified Cochrane Risk Of Bias Assessment Tool for Non-Randomized Studies of Interventions.

Results: After screening, 15 studies met the eligibility criteria. Eight studies reported on L1 performance and 13 studies reported on L2 performance. All eight L1 studies and 12 of the L2 studies showed that the performance of bilingual children with DLD was significantly weaker than that of TD children on the SRTs. Data suggested that working memory and receptive vocabulary might influence participants' performance.

Conclusions: This review suggests that the performance of bilingual children with DLD is significantly weaker than those with TD on both L1 and L2 SRTs. While limited by the small number of studies examining participant characteristics, weaker working memory and receptive vocabulary may underlie poorer SRT performance in bilingual children with DLD.