

Language mixing in young multilingual children and its correlates: A systematic review

Vera Snijders¹, Merel van Witteloostuijn¹, Ora Oudgenoeg-Paz¹, Elma Blom^{1,2}

¹Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands. ²Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway

Abstract

All multilingual children mix their languages to some degree and incorporate elements from multiple languages into their speech. Previous research has revealed that children's language mixing is not a result of confusion but is inherently social. Social factors (e.g., social sensitivity and sociolinguistic awareness) are needed to successfully adapt language use to different situations and interlocutors from an early age (i.e., 2 years). These social factors are expected to interact with linguistic (e.g., language proficiency and dominance) and cognitive (e.g., inhibitory control and selective attention) factors, especially in children where social, linguistic and cognitive skills are still developing. Moreover, these linguistic and cognitive factors may have differential relations with different types of language mixing (i.e., cross-speaker, inter-, and intra-sentential mixing). At the moment, there is a substantial body of research that has addressed these different factors, but a comprehensive overview is lacking. This results in a limited understanding of the dynamic interplay of factors in childhood language mixing. In this study, we present a systematic review of the literature on relations between social, linguistic, and cognitive factors and language mixing in multilingual children aged 2-6 years. We aim to a) identify which social, linguistic, and cognitive factors have been studied in relation to language mixing; b) discuss associations between these factors and different types of language mixing; and c) consider interactions between these factors in relation to language mixing. In so doing, the review seeks to shed light on the different factors driving language mixing behavior in early childhood and guide future research. The PRISMA-P protocol for this systematic review has been preregistered on PROSPERO (CRD42023484906), and OSF (<https://osf.io/c743s/>). Initially, we obtained 4,239 records from four databases (i.e., ERIC, LLBA, PsycInfo, and Scopus), from which duplicates were removed ($n = 1,045$). Currently, we are screening titles and abstracts with AI-aided technology (ASReview; Van de Schoot et al., 2021), using the SAFE procedure (Boetje & Van de Schoot, 2023). In the following months, we will screen the full text of possibly relevant papers, analyze the final selection of papers, and write up a systematic review article.