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A longitudinal study on the production of filled pauses among bilingual and monolingual children

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Abstract

Filled pauses (e.g., um) help speakers to maintain a conversational floor with their listener(s). Considered an advanced form of disfluency; they emerge when children obtain some language competency. Bilinguals might frequently produce filled pauses as they are sensitive to communication. This longitudinal study examined Turkish-English bilingual (N=50) and Turkish monolingual (N=48) children's production of filled pauses in L1-Turkish and L2-English narratives. Children in three age groups were recruited in Time1 (5-,7- and 9-year-olds) and Time2 (6-,8- and 10-year-olds) and were asked to narrate a story from a picture book. Results showed that controlling for L1-Turkish proficiency scores, the filled pause frequency in L1-Turkish narratives increased from Time1 to Time2, both for bilinguals and monolinguals for all age groups. We obtained the same findings for bilingual children's English narratives, controlling for English proficiency. We suggest that filled pauses might stem from metacognitive processes, which become more prominent with age.