

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

**Macrostructure and disfluencies in narratives of
bilingual children**

Hadar Yaari

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Abstract

Background: Bilingual children may be more disfluent when they retell a story in the societal language (L2) compared to their home language (L1). The novelty of this study lies in the examination of disfluencies across different episodes in a story/narrative, different story grammar (SG) elements and between participants' home and societal languages.

Aims: The aim of this study is to characterize the effect of bilingualism on the frequency and type of disfluencies across the narrative and across the different story grammar elements.

Methods and Procedures: 20 children aged 60-78 months produced narratives using a wordless picture book. Narratives were examined for the relation of disfluency frequency and type (silent pause, repetition, self-correction and filled pause) story grammar (SG) elements (character + setting, initial event, internal response, plan, attempt and outcome), episodic location (episodes 1-5), and language (Russian or Hebrew).

Outcomes and Results: In terms of macrostructure, comparison of disfluencies by different SG elements yielded no significant differences. In terms of episodic location, episode 2 and episode 4 contained significantly more disfluencies than episode 1. Comparison of disfluency type by episodes yielded no significant differences except for silent pauses which were more frequent in Episode 2 than in Episode 1. In terms of language, children produced more silent pauses in both languages and more disfluencies in general in Russian than in Hebrew. The analysis examining the relationship between SG, disfluencies and language of narrative showed an effect of SG on the frequency of disfluencies in Hebrew yet not in Russian.

Conclusions and Implications: The discussion will be focused on the role of disfluencies on the macrostructural aspects and what is entailed in narrative coherence in each of the languages. In addition, disfluencies may be due to word retrieval difficulties. This theoretical outcome of the study might help in understanding planning and formulation processes among bilingual children. The practical outcome of the study relates to how these processes may affect fluency in bilingual children in an effort to improve diagnosis and / or intervention.

Keywords: narrative, macrostructure, disfluencies, language dominance.

What This Paper Adds: The effect of bilingualism on frequency of disfluencies and the relationship between the use of different SG elements and duration of silent pauses has been only recently addressed in recent literature. Research examining the link between disfluencies type, their episodic location and the use of SG elements has not yet been acknowledged in bilingual narratives.