



FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA Univerzita Karlova

Ústav anglického jazyka a didaktiky

Bc. Alžběta Brabcová (2018) *Effect of Time of Exposure to L2 on the Comprehension of Relative Clauses in Primary School Children*

Posudek oponenta

Alžběta Brabcová's thesis presents an interesting exploration of bilingual language acquisition and focuses specifically on the effect the age of onset (i.e. the age when the contact with the second language started) has on the development of syntactic and morphological competence. The age of onset is understood as a key parameter as it determines the length of exposure to the acquired language.

As the thesis deals with bilingualism and the development of language comprehension by bilingual children, the theoretical treatise discusses primarily the topic of bilingualism and presents a lively and readable exposition of some of the key phenomena within this field. The author bases her text on a large number of well selected sources which she adequately uses to support her line of argumentation. Once bilingualism has been discussed, the author progresses to the topic of child language acquisition, which she does from the perspective of bilingual children, and eventually discusses the age of onset and the amount of exposure, which are key for the understanding of her research project. The theoretical part concludes with a brief discussion of relative clauses as this is the linguistic structure chosen to carry out the experiment. This choice is justified by the relative complexity of relative clauses which makes this structure difficult to acquire and typically happens at a later age when simpler structures have already been fully or at least partially acquired. The structure also allows for a manipulation necessary for the planned experiment as it allows for the combination of nouns with different grammatical numbers occurring as antecedents or as the subjects or objects on the relative clause. Such combinations allow for the observation of the effect of both syntactic and morphological complexity. All of these choices are very well explained and justified.

The hypothesis links the age of exposure with the accuracy of comprehension of the different types of relative clauses (i.e. with the relative pronoun acting as a subject or object) and matching or mismatching the grammatical number of the antecedent and the subject/object present in the relative clause itself.

The data and method description are clear and complete. A question arises only as to whether for the group of simultaneous bilinguals the fact that two different scenarios (i.e. both English parent but also one English and one Czech) might not have acted as a possible confounding variable. On the other hand, it is highly commendable that the author carried out pre-tests in



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order to eliminate other potential confounding variables such as learning difficulties or cognitive impairment.

The experiment involved 45 participants, all of whom were tested and pretested individually. The scale of the experiment and the amount of work is significant as each of the tests took a full hour to complete. The experiment is a partial replication of a study by Adani et al. (2014) but it varies in the inclusion of participants with the different age of onset. The analysis is based on an ANOVA which compares the results of the different combinations of the type of relative clause as well as plurality within each of the three examined groups. Whilst significant differences are shown here, I find that a between-group comparison might also have made further insights possible and wonder why the respective ANOVAs were not carried out.

On the whole, the author has provided convincing evidence of the fact she is capable of planning and carrying out a complex (especially logistically) experiment and of evaluating its results and comparing them with a voluminous body of existing research.

The thesis is clearly structured, competently written in excellent and readable English with a minimum of typos. The candidate has clearly shown academic competence at an advanced level and produced a thesis which thoroughly meets the criteria for MA theses. I therefore approve of the thesis for being submitted to the viva in its current form and suggest a preliminary grade „výborná“.

PhDr. Tomáš Gráf, Ph.D.

22 August 2018

Questions for the viva:

Why was a between-group ANOVA for the three different groups based on the age of onset not carried out? What was the basis of your comparison of the results of the results in these three groups?

What are the limitations of your study? Were there any problems with the design and/or the realisation of the experiment?