

This study investigates the patterns in nonword repetition performance of children with a developmental language disorder and bilingual children. It has been shown by previous research that both children with developmental language disorder and bilingual children tend to perform poorly in nonword repetition tasks. As these tasks are one of the tools often used for diagnosing markers of DLD in young children, diagnosing bilinguals with DLD proves to be difficult, since both of the groups exhibit a poor performance. An analysis of the patterns found in NWR performance of bilingual children and children with DLD might shed more light onto the issue. The study focuses on analysing the performance in a widely used assessment task – The Children’s Test of Nonword Repetition. Three samples of data were analysed. The first sample of data consisted of monolingual English-speaking children diagnosed with a developmental language disorder. The second sample of data consisted of Czech-English bilingual children from international schools in Prague who started acquiring English at the time of birth, i.e. simultaneous bilinguals. The third and final sample consisted of Czech-English bilingual children from international schools in Prague who started acquiring English after one year of age, i.e. sequential bilinguals. The items of the CNRep task were divided into categories and were subsequently analysed. Two models for a statistical analysis were created. For the first condition of the study, the items were divided into four categories based on nonword length (2, 3, 4 and 5 syllable nonwords). For the second condition, 4 and 5 syllable nonwords were further divided into items that did and did not contain a noninitial cluster. The results obtained in this study were mixed. A similarity was found in certain patterns of performance of DLD children and sequential bilinguals. Both of the groups showed an effect of length in longer nonwords, and both of them appear to be negatively impacted by the presence of clusters, independently from the length of the nonword. Simultaneous bilinguals showed a contrasting pattern, as they were influenced by length only in shorter nonwords, and the effect of cluster was not as clear cut in their performance. Therefore, the age of onset of the second language seems to be the determining factor in whether looking at patterns in nonword repetition performance might disentangle the effects of DLD and bilingualism.

Keywords: bilingualism, bilingual acquisition, child bilingualism, language acquisition, phonological acquisition, age of onset, simultaneous bilingualism, sequential bilingualism, nonword repetition, developmental language disorder