

Emergent language and literacy skills in bilingual preschool children

Jason Felihkatubbe* & Kimberly McDowell

Department of Spanish, Wichita State University.

The purpose was to determine if a child's proficiency in vocabulary skills in their native language was related to and/or predictive of their proficiency in language and literacy skills in their emerging language. The sample consisted of 115 bilingual (English/Spanish) participants between ages 3 and 5 from Wichita-area Head Starts. The children were tested utilizing standardized formal measures. Tests were administered individually in a counter-balanced order in both languages by trained bilingual research assistants in 2-3 sessions. Results indicated that proficiency in native language vocabulary (Spanish) was not correlated to proficiency in the emerging language vocabulary (English); however, English and Spanish vocabulary skills were statistically correlated with literacy skills. Executive control was correlated with English vocabulary skills but not Spanish, and correlated with literacy skills. To determine if English language/literacy skills were predictive of Spanish vocabulary, a simultaneous multiple regression analysis was computed. The overall model was significant; $F(3, 112) = 13.85$, $p < .000$. Executive control and the literacy skills measure both contributed unique variance to English vocabulary, but Spanish vocabulary did not. The findings provide interesting insight into the relations among native language skills and emerging language skills. This has instructional implications for teachers and policy makers.