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Degree of Bilingualism and Reading: Cantonese-Speaking English Language Learners

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Introduction

Reading is a complex skill that involves multiple processes, including phonological processing, orthographic processing, and semantic processing. For bilingual children, reading in a second language (L2) may be more challenging due to differences in orthography and phonology between the two languages.

Main Questions

1. How does the degree of bilingualism affect reading performance in L2?

2. What are the underlying mechanisms of this relationship?

Methods

Participants: 50 Cantonese-speaking English language learners (ELLs) from a public school in California, ranging in age from 8 to 12 years old.

Measures: Reading fluency (words per minute) and reading comprehension (percentage correct) were measured using standardized tests.

Procedure: Participants completed reading tasks in English and Cantonese. The degree of bilingualism was measured using a validated scale.

Results

Results showed that reading performance in English was significantly higher for participants with a higher degree of bilingualism. This relationship was mediated by orthographic processing skills.

Degree of Bilingualism

Participants were categorized into three groups based on their degree of bilingualism: Low, Medium, and High. Reading performance in English was significantly higher for the High group compared to the Low group.

Orthographic Processing

Orthographic processing skills were measured using a word recognition task. Participants with higher bilingualism scores showed higher orthographic processing skills.



Orthographic Skills

Orthographic skills were measured using a word recognition task. Participants with higher bilingualism scores showed higher orthographic skills.



Multiple Regression Results

Variable	B	SE	β	p
Age	0.12	0.05	0.25	0.03
Gender	-0.05	0.04	-0.12	0.21
Degree of Bilingualism	0.18	0.06	0.32	0.005
Orthographic Processing	0.15	0.04	0.35	0.001

Key Findings

1. Higher bilingualism is associated with higher reading performance in English.

2. Orthographic processing skills mediate the relationship between bilingualism and reading performance.

Effect of Degree of Bilingualism and Orthographic Processing on Reading Comprehension



Conclusions

The findings of this study suggest that the degree of bilingualism is a significant predictor of reading performance in English. This relationship is mediated by orthographic processing skills. Therefore, interventions that focus on improving orthographic processing skills may be beneficial for bilingual children.

Literature Cited

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