

## **Measuring linguistic competence in early bilingualism and trilingualism: Applying the PPVT in a cross-sectional study with children acquiring Spanish and French in different language combinations**

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn 2007) is used to measure “the examinees’ achievement in acquiring vocabulary” (Dunn & Dunn 2007: 2) and to analyze language development. The test offers a comparison with monolingual children in several age groups. In our study, the PPVT is used to compare the language proficiency in early bi- and trilingualism, and it is incorporated in a larger research project on early trilingualism.

In this paper, we focus on bilingual (n=18), trilingual (n=29) and multilingual (n=4) children, whose age is between three and seven, and on their language combinations. Altogether we tested 51 children, 22 boys and 29 girls. The data have been gathered in bilingual institutions in Spain and Germany. We applied the PPVT in French, Spanish, Catalan, German and Arabic. There are cases in which the children spoke further languages, such as Italian, English or Russian. Yet, they were not part of our study and thus they were not considered.

In the literature it has been claimed that monolinguals receive better results than bilingual children (Sattler & Altes 1984; Portocarrero et al. 2007). However, Bialystok et al. (2010) found that it might not always be the case: It depends on the semantic field. Our study shows that the trilingual and multilingual children achieve better scores than the monolingual control group investigated in the PPVT (that was used to standardize the PPVT in each language).

The data have been compared inter- and intraindividually in terms of the number of languages, the language combination and the proficiency of the languages. One result of our study shows that early trilingual children achieve better scores in Spanish than early bilingual children, independently of the number of L1s and their combination. Considering the proficiency of the child’s L1s, our data show that these are generally balanced.

## References

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