



REVIEW

Alejandra Auza and Richard G. Schwartz (eds.):
Language Development and Disorders in
Spanish-speaking Children

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Scholars from different areas have been interested in discovering complex processes that lie behind language acquisition. This multidisciplinary approach has allowed psycholinguists to explore language development in typical and atypical conditions in great depth. *Language Development and Disorders in Spanish-speaking Children* (2017), volume 14 of *Literacy Studies*, provides an overwhelming collection of previously unpublished original works conducted by researchers working with monolingual children in Mexico and Chile and bilingual and monolingual children in Spain and the United States. The editors of this volume, Alejandra Auza Benavides and Richard Schwartz, both of whom have carried out research on language acquisition and disorders, present 17 chapters of this book. The chapters provide an updated view of Spanish language development during childhood. Although Spanish is one of the most spoken languages worldwide, only a small amount of research is available and published in English journals and books. The main purpose of this volume is to report on the recent works in language acquisition of Spanish-speaking children, considering cognitive abilities and sociocultural context.

The book is structured in four parts. After the preface, part I includes 3 chapters devoted to typical language development in monolingual and bilingual children. Part II, containing 4 chapters, focuses on children at risk of language disorders, dealing with pre-term children, their processing speed and how language disorders may be affected by family and socioeconomical environment. The broadest part, part III, includes 7 chapters on different issues about Specific Language Impairment (SLI), e.g. working memory and narrative comprehension. Finally, the fourth and final part consists of 3 chapters whose aim is to inform readers about language development in children with certain syndromes (William Syndrome and Down Syndrome) and other language disorders.

The first part, “**Typical Language Development in Monolingual and Bilingual Children**”, includes three chapters. The first one, written by Sonia Mariscal and Alejandra Auza Benavides, “Typical language development of monolingual Spanish-speaking children”, provides an overview of how Spanish children acquire their first language. This review includes different research methods, such as Preferential Looking Paradigm and longitudinal studies, and considers the acquisition of phonology, morphosyntax and vocabulary. This chapter serves as a reference for language acquisition researchers and clinicians.

The second chapter, “Language development in bilingual Spanish-Catalan children with and without Specific Language Impairment: A longitudinal perspective”, by Eva Aguilar-Mediavilla, Lucia Buil-Legaz, Raül López-Penadés, and Daniel Adrover-Roig, explores simultaneous Spanish-Catalan language acquisition. This work considers similarities and differences between

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monolingual and bilingual language acquisition, cognitive abilities of bilinguals, types of bilingualism (sequential or simultaneous), and the presence of Specific Language Impairment. The key part of this chapter consists in reviewing language development of bilingual Spanish-Catalan children diagnosed with SLI. The authors mention all components of language development: phonological, morphosyntactic, lexical-semantic, and pragmatic, and also executive functions. The final chapter in the first part, “Bilingual and monolingual children’s patterns of syntactic variation: Variable clitic placement in Spanish”, by Naomi L. Shin, Pablo E. Requena, and Anita Kemp, compares grammar acquisition between Spanish-English bilinguals and Spanish monolinguals. Specifically, they analyse the use of clitics by both groups using a corpus of spontaneous speech samples.

The second part, “**Children at Risk of Language Disorders**”, consists of four chapters. The first of them, “Executive functions and language development in pre-term and full-term children”, written by Miguel Pérez-Pereira, Manuel Peralbo Uzquiano, and Alberto Valeiro, addresses the issue of language development in pre-term infants grouped according to their gestational age. The data for the study was collected longitudinally, following children’s development from birth to their 5th birthday. The striking finding of this research is the fact that low risk pre-term children do not exhibit generalised delays in executive functions or language developments, but extremely or very pre-term children do. In the next chapter, “Processing speed of infants with high and low communicative skills”, Elda Alicia Alva Canto and Paloma Suárez Brio analyse the correlation between the individual differences in processing speed and the development of communicative skills during the first year of life. Using the Intermodal Preferential Looking Paradigm, the authors suggest that differences in communicative skills reflect differences in linguistic skills (e.g. word learning). The third research of this section, “Relevance of family psychosocial environment in the language development of Mexican children”, by Silvia Izazola-Ezquerro, Mario Mandujano-Valdés, Rolando Rivera-González, Antonio Sierra-Cedillo, Miriam Figueroa-Olea, Karla Soler-Limón, and Yadira Villanueva-Romero, explores the correlation between early language and communication development and a low socioeconomic situation. According to the preliminary results, which should be confirmed by further studies, psychosocial environment significantly influences the early language development. The last chapter in this section, “Language delay and amount of exposure to the language: Two (un)related phenomena in early Spanish-Basque bilingualism”, by Maria-Jose Ezaizarrena and Iñaki García Fernández, is devoted to the factor of linguistic exposure in the language acquisition process. Using the Communicative Developmental Inventories, the authors study whether a varying degree of input influences linguistic development.

The third part of the volume, “**Children with Specific Language Impairment**”, includes 7 chapters. This section starts with a research by Dolors Girbau, “Neurocognitive and psycholinguistic profile of Specific Language Impairment: A research study on comorbidity of SLI with/without reading disabilities”. Firstly, Girbau reviews different approaches to identify SLI in Spanish-speaking children. Then, she presents the results of a set of tasks aimed to assess

phonological working memory (i.e. nonword repetition task, a battery of psycholinguistic tests) with SLI children, SLI children who also have reading difficulties and typically developing peers. Following, Kerry Danahy Ebert and Giang Phan present their work “Connections among language knowledge, language processing, and nonlinguistic cognitive processing in bilingual children with language impairment”. Using cross-sectional and longitudinal data from Spanish-English bilinguals, the authors explore relationships between nonlinguistic cognitive processing, language processing, and language knowledge. Their results show correlations between nonlinguistic cognitive processing and linguistic skills in L1 and L2, which can help to clarify the nature of the SLI in bilingual children. In the third chapter, “Sentence repetition in typical and atypical Spanish-speaking preschoolers who are English language learners”, Gabriela Simón-Cerejido reports the results of a sentence repetition task in English and Spanish. She concludes that sentence repetition could be an accurate measure for SLI Spanish-speaking children, whereas the same task in English caused difficulties for both, typically developing and SLI preschoolers. Llorenç Andreu and Mònica Sanz-Torrent in their contribution “The role of verb semantic representation in sentence processing in children with SLI” review studies related to argument structure and verb semantics in language comprehension and production tasks. Then, they present results of their own research, arguing that i) SLI children show more difficulties in language production than in language comprehension and ii) SLI children have incomplete semantic representation for verbs which subsequently affects processing time and correct naming. Following the topic of language processing, the next chapter, “Self-repair timing of lexical problem sources: A window into Primary Language Impairment online processing”, by Wendy Fabiola Lara Galindo and Cecilia Rojas-Nieto, deals with self-repair processes that SLI children use when having a difficulty accessing a word. This chapter also analyses the traits of repair processes and the causes of these. The next chapter, “Narrative comprehension and language skills in Chilean children with Specific Language Impairment”, by Carmen Julia Coloma and María Mercedes Pavez, addresses the issue of narrative comprehension by SLI children. They discuss the difficulties SLI children have in different tasks of narrative comprehension. The last chapter of this section, “Working memory and morphosyntax in Children with Specific (Primary) Impairment”, by Andrea Chávez and Alejandra Auza Benavides, reports on the correlation of working memory and syntactic complexity in Spanish-speaking children with SLI. The authors argue that relative sentence production could be potentially used for the identification of SLI children.

The fourth part, “**Children with Syndromes and other Language Disorders**”, consists of 3 chapters which are focused on language development in children with Williams and Down Syndromes. The first work, “Morphological profile of Williams Syndrome: Typical or atypical?”, by Eliseo Diez-Itza, Verónica Martínez, Maite Fernández-Urquiza, and Aránzazu Antón, reports the results of a linguistic analysis of Spanish-speaking children with Williams Syndrome (WS). The authors provide relevant data on the cause of WS and describe the method used in this research, which consisted in corpus analysis of spontaneous speech samples. Natalia Arias-Trejo and Julia B. Barrón-Martínez in their chapter “Language skills in Down Syndrome” address

the issue of linguistic abilities of children with Down Syndrome. Specifically, they focus on a review of available research on vocabulary comprehension and production and morphosyntactic skills. The final chapter of this volume, “Vocabulary and cognitive flexibility in people with Down Syndrome”, by Octavio García, Beatriz Castillo-Ignacio, and Natalia Arias-Trejo, reports on the correlation of cognitive flexibility and receptive vocabulary, reviewing recent studies regarding these two aspects.

To conclude, Auza Benavides’ and Schwartz’s volume is a highly-informative and accessible contribution on language development and disorders in Spanish-speaking children. This volume includes research using a variety of different approaches and addressing different topics. All this makes the book a must-read for researchers and students interested in how Spanish-speaking monolingual and bilingual children acquire their first language, which children are at risk of language disorders, cognitive and linguistic characteristics of a common disorder SLI, and language development in Williams and Down Syndromes.