

Dialectal word form recognition in bivarietal children

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German children growing up in dialectal areas often encounter Standard German word forms (e.g., [fu:s], *Fuß*, “foot”) and dialectal forms that can be very similar to the Standard German form (e.g., [fūəs]). The two word forms must ultimately be stored in the mental lexicon but it is unclear how these lexical representations develop (cf., van der Feest & Johnson 2016; Durrant et al. 2015; Floccia et al. 2012; van der Feest, Rose & Johnson 2022; Kartushina & Mayor 2022).

Our project tests German children growing up in dialectal areas. In previous research, 12-18-month-old monovarietal children (Standard German input) showed the expected familiarity preference for Standard German stimuli. Bivarietal children (Standard German and regional dialect) in the same age range also recognized the Standard German word forms, but exhibited a novelty preference, probably pointing to more mature processing (Braun et al. 2021).

To investigate whether bivarietal German children also understand dialectal word forms (cf., Floccia et al. 2012) and likewise show a novelty preference, we replicated Braun et al. (2021) with Swabian stimuli. We recorded the 18 word and 18 nonce-word stimuli of Braun et al. (2021) anew, this time by a Swabian speaker (word and nonce-word recordings were matched for pitch range and perceived speaker affect). We created eight randomized lists (four word and for nonce-word lists, average duration ~17sec) to which children were randomly assigned. Data collection is taking place via an App for iPads, currently distributed in the Swabian/Alemannic area (South-West Germany). Following Braun et al. (2021), looks from currently 35 children are semi-automatically coded. Looking times are analyzed using linear-mixed effects regression models with word-type (word, nonce-word), age (in months) and dialectal input as fixed factors. Results are discussed in terms of variability in the input, linguistic maturation, and the development of lexical representations in bivarietal children

References

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