

# WORD LEARNING STRATEGIES IN 3-YEAR-OLD MONO- AND BILINGUAL CHILDREN



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RESULTS (preliminary: N = 59 out of 74)



## BACKGROUND

### The mutual exclusivity (ME) effect

- Children map novel words onto novel unnamed objects [1]
- ↳ Different theoretical explanations: ME constraint [2], pragmatic inferences [3] or associative processes [4]

### Bilingual difficulties in word disambiguation/ learning

- Disambiguation in the ME task [5]
- Retaining word-object links that were built based on the ME assumption [6]
- ↳ Lexical constraints: Bilinguals recognize the inefficiency of ME as a word learning strategy [7]
- ↳ Associative accounts: Bilingual language background leads to more fragile word representations [8]

### Bilingual advantages in word disambiguation/ learning

- Understanding communicative intent [9]
- ↳ e.g., due to compensation for a lag in other aspects of language acquisition? [10]



How robust & specific are bilingual (dis)advantages?



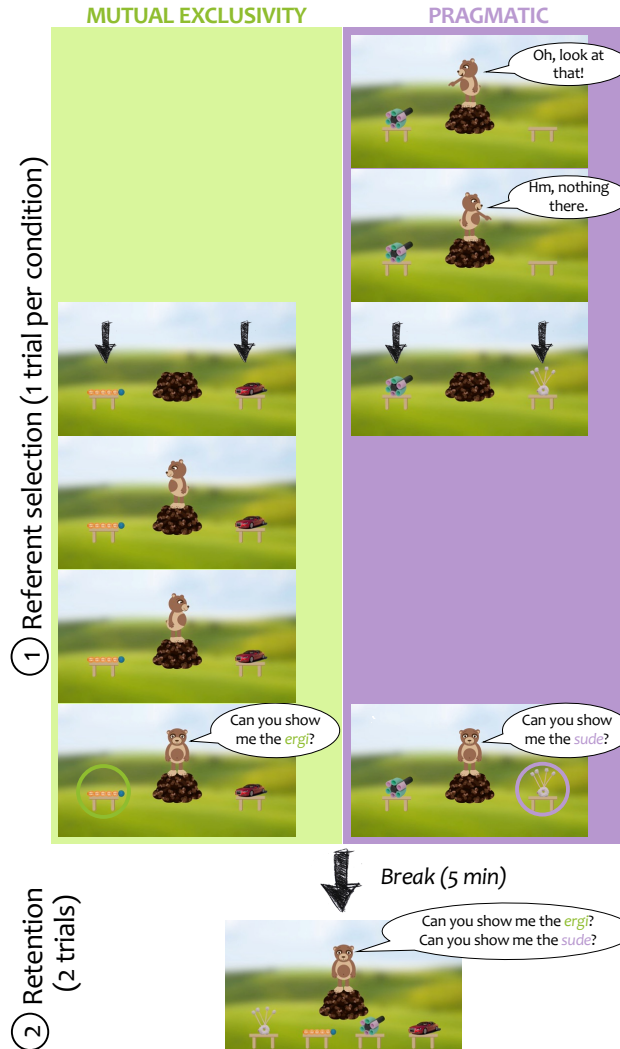
Are bilingual difficulties specific to the **ME task** (indicating differences in word learning strategies instead of general difficulties in lexical tasks)?

If so, may superior skills in other (**pragmatic**) areas compensate for this disadvantage?

## METHOD

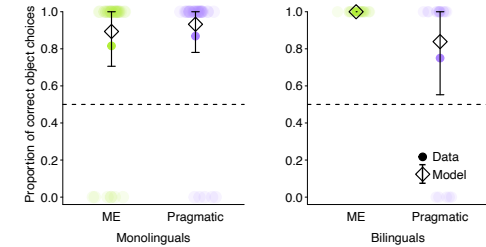


Online study with **3-year-old mono- and bilinguals**  
→ Comparable groups: at least one parent fluent in German  
→ 2 conditions (within-subjects)



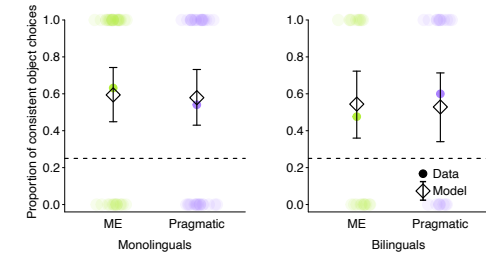
## 1) Referent selection

Correct choice ~ condition \* language\_status + gaze\_order + (1|id)



## 2) Retention

Consistent choice ~ condition \* language\_status + (1|id)



## DISCUSSION

- ✓ Children used lexical and pragmatic information for disambiguation & retained the novel words acquired this way
- ✗ No clear evidence for bilingual **disadvantages** in the **ME task** (neither in disambiguation nor learning)
- ✗ No signs of bilingual **pragmatic advantages** → either more specific to other areas of pragmatic skills or less robust than assumed [11]

Both mono- and bilingual 3-year-olds use pragmatic & lexical information for word learning – with no sig. differences between groups

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