



Nonword Repetition and Language Learning

Student: Kelann Lobitz, Advisor: Jennifer Windsor
 Department of Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences, College of Liberal Arts



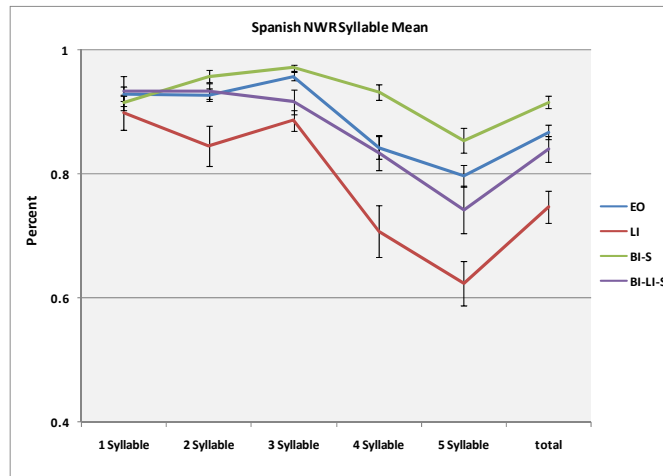
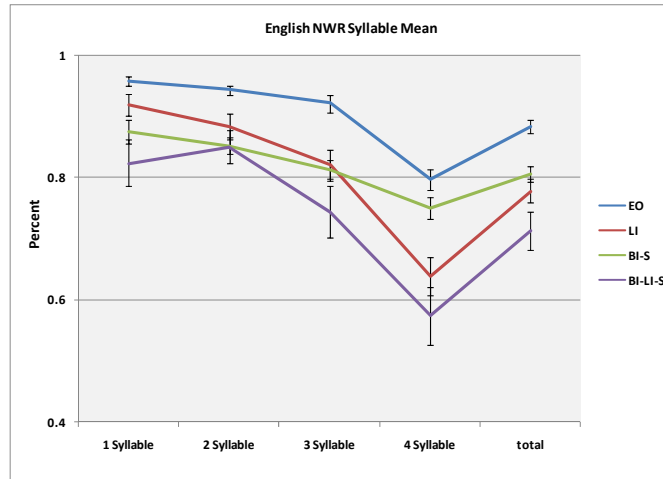
Introduction

Children's developmental language skills are a critical marker of academic success. An important issue in identifying language delays in the US is that many assessments are biased against children with a native language other than English. The nonword repetition task (NWR) taps phonological working memory. It was designed to be non-biased (Campbell et al, 1997); however, preliminary work suggests it is not free of linguistic bias (Kohnert et al, 2006). The purpose of this study was to examine NWR in more detail.

Nonword Repetition Task (NWR)

•We used two NWR tasks administered under headphones, one English and one Spanish. The English task included 16 words (e.g., *naib*, *abstal*), and the Spanish task had 20 words (e.g., *tebaka*, *nochibeni*). The task was scored as percent phonemes correct.

•The participants were 196 children, aged 6 to 11 years: There were 4 groups:
 77 typical children who spoke English only (EO),
 35 English children with a language impairment (LI)
 66 typical bilingual Spanish-English speakers (BI-S)
 18 bilingual children with LI (BI-LI-S)



Results and Discussion

- NWR is not language free. EO children were the most accurate in English NWR, followed by the BI-S, LI, and BI-LI-S groups.
- BI-S children were the most accurate in Spanish NWR, followed by the EO, BI-LI-S, and LI groups.
- The majority of the English omission of substitution pronunciation errors made by the bilingual children were with final consonants (/p/, /b/, /g/) in the longest nonsense words. These errors likely indicate the influence of the native language.



References and Acknowledgements

Campbell, T., Dollaghan, C., Needleman, H., & Janosky, J. (1997). Reducing bias in language assessment: processing-dependent measures. *JSLHR*, 40, 519-525.
 Kohnert, K., Windsor, J., & Yim, D. (2006). Do language-based processing tasks separate children with language impairment from typical bilinguals? *LDRP*, 21, 19-29.

We thank Dr. Kathryn Kohnert for her support. This research was funded by a grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (HD 05 3222).