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Multimodal-bilingual oral narrative development of Zulu children and adults

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ABSTRACT

Title: Multimodal-Bilingual Oral Narrative Development of Zulu Children and Adults

When children's speech abilities develop, so do their use of co-speech gestures. To test for this postulation, the study requested 55 L1 Zulu speakers to narrate what they saw from a short wordless *Tom and Jerry* cartoon. 25 of the participants performed the narrative in their L2 and 30 of the participants performed the narrative in their L1.The narration took place in the participants second language which is also their medium of instruction.

Our predictions were investigated by studying the narrative development of children belonging to two different age groups (5-to-6 years old and 9-to-10 years old); whose first language is Zulu and their second language is English. Adult groups were used as target groups. To study the effects of bilingualism we compared the current studies' data to previous research conducted on L1 Zulu narratives. The questions which the following study aimed to explore were as follows; what kind of effect will bilingualism have on story-telling and narrating? Will there be an age effect on the multimodal narratives between the 5/6 year old learners and the 9/10 year old learners? And lastly, what kind of differences and similarities occur in gesture production between the L1 Zulu speakers that narrated the story in their L2 and the L1 Zulu speakers who narrated the story in their L1?

The results showed a strong effect of age on language complexity, discourse construction and gesture for both languages, confirming that development of speech and gesture are a part of the same language process. Zulu narratives were longer and followed to the norms of orature, unlike the L2 English narratives. This confirmed that language has an influence on discourse construction. This developmental shift towards a more complex narrative, through words and gestures, as well as the effect of language is discussed in terms of the theoretical implications in the study of gesture and discourse development.

Keywords: gestures, co-speech gestures, second language acquisition, bilingualism, discourse development, Zulu children