
Early word segmentation in bilingual infants acquiring German and French

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Since speech is continuous and does not contain inter-word pauses, word segmentation is one of the most challenging tasks infants have to face when acquiring their native language. Research shows that prosody facilitates infants speech segmentation (Jusczyk et al., 1999), though the use of prosodic cues is language-specific (Polka & Sundara, 2012). Infants growing up bilingually, especially with rhythmically different languages, face a distinct challenge to segment both languages efficiently as this involves a language-dependent adjustment of segmentation procedures (Polka et al., 2017).

In the current study, looking at German-French Bilinguals (9-12 months old), we address the question of whether infants acquiring two rhythmically different languages have different language-dependent segmentation procedures: syllable-based for French and stress-based for German. Segmentation of bi-syllabic words was tested with EEG and the head-turn procedure in a dual-language task (Polka et al., 2017), testing infants with both languages (German; French) within the same test session. Preliminary results will be presented.

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