

Fluency as an indicator of language dominance in bilingual speakers of High and Low German

Bilingual speakers tend to be more proficient in one of their languages (Olsson & Sullivan, 2005). Since the level of proficiency can vary depending on speaking style and situation (Daller et al., 2010), determining these levels for a speaker is a major challenge. In the case of a regional language such as Low German, there is the additional problem that there is no standard variety for determining language proficiency. Therefore, fluency measures are often used to determine language proficiency in second language acquisition research (de Jong et al., 2015; Götz, 2013; Guz, 2015) and more generally as an indicator of language dominance in bilingual speakers (Daller et al., 2010).

This study aims to investigate which fluency measures are related to language dominance in bilingual speakers of High and Low German. We recruited 95 bilingual speakers of High and Low German spoken in East Frisia in Northwest Germany. Our participants were between 15 and 88 years old at the time of the recording (47 female and 48 male). They completed a series of four different tasks in each language which were aimed to be as authentic as possible. These tasks consisted of a narrative task, where they were asked open questions to elicit spontaneous speech, the description of a comic strip, a route description, and a reading task. First results show promising effects for articulation rate, number of pauses per minute and mean pause length. The results differed depending on task type and gender. The general tendencies show a faster articulation rate and shorter as well as fewer pauses per minute for the more dominant language.

References

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