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A fifty year retrospective investigation: Does written code-switching impact language outcomes in bilingual children?

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Abstract

Code-switching, or alternating between languages, among bilingual children is an oft-studied linguistic phenomenon. In the United States, given that the majority of school-aged bilingual children are Spanish-English speakers, understanding code-switching behavior is of utmost importance. Code-switching has been shown to increase bilingual children's ability to communicate. This study is a systematic literature review spanning fifty years of research into school-aged Spanish-English bilingual children. Unsurprisingly, results indicated that language use and proficiency are the most common covariates across studies. Bilingual language proficiency refers to the ability to produce and comprehend a language with accuracy, and while educational outcomes of code-switching behaviors are highly correlated with bilingual children's oral language proficiency, few code-switching studies focused on written language. Therefore, children's ability to communicate through written language code-switching is a drastically under-explored phenomenon, which has large implications for educational outcomes, psychological and linguistic theory, and future neuroscience research.