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# Addressing the Word Gap in Singapore: Growth Trajectory of Vocabulary of Children Growing up in Bi/Multilingual Households

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## Abstract

In Singapore, English is the main language at home for 75% of children between 5-9y (2020 Census). The education system has a “English & Mother Tongue” bilingualism policy, and most children grow up hearing two or more languages. Previous examination of vocabulary sizes of Singaporean children showed notably lower scores for age-matched monolingual English-speaking US children. We designed new developmental vocabulary checklists for main languages spoken in Singapore (English, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil) and Red-Dot, which is a tier of child-directed local words that are not captured in vocabulary inventories adapted from monolingual materials. Many of these local words likely arose from Singapore’s dense contact language environment (e.g., ‘pom pom’ for ‘children’s bathing’). Caregivers of 140 children between 8-40m completed these vocabulary checklists and language input profiles. We analyzed predictive power of language input of caregivers and vocabulary outcomes and growth trajectories of these children.