

BiLex-Kids: A Bilingual Word Database for Children 5-13 Years Old

Authors : Aris R. Terzopoulos, Georgia Z. Niolaki, Lynne G. Duncan, Mark A. J. Wilson, Antonios Kyparissiadis, Jackie Masterson

Abstract : As word databases for bilingual children are not available, researchers, educators and textbook writers must rely on monolingual databases. The aim of this study is thus to develop a bilingual word database, BiLex-kids, an online open access developmental word database for 5-13 year old bilingual children who learn Greek as a second language and have English as their dominant one. BiLex-kids is compiled from 120 Greek textbooks used in Greek-English bilingual education in the UK, USA and Australia, and provides word translations in the two languages, pronunciations in Greek, and psycholinguistic variables (e.g. Zipf, Frequency per million, Dispersion, Contextual Diversity, Neighbourhood size). After clearing the textbooks of non-relevant items (e.g. punctuation), algorithms were applied to extract the psycholinguistic indices for all words. As well as one total lexicon, the database produces values for all ages (one lexicon for each age) and for three age bands (one lexicon per age band: 5-8, 9-11, 12-13 years). BiLex-kids provides researchers with accurate figures for a wide range of psycholinguistic variables, making it a useful and reliable research tool for selecting stimuli to examine lexical processing among bilingual children. In addition, it offers children the opportunity to study word spelling, learn translations and listen to pronunciations in their second language. It further benefits educators in selecting age-appropriate words for teaching reading and spelling, while special educational needs teachers will have a resource to control the content of word lists when designing interventions for bilinguals with literacy difficulties.

Keywords : bilingual children, psycholinguistics, vocabulary development, word databases

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