

# A Longitudinal Study on the Validity of the German LITMUS-SRT with Late Successive Bilinguals

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Recent research has focused on distinguishing typical language development (TD) from Specific Language Impairment (SLI) in mono- and bilingual contexts through the administration of LITMUS (Language Impairment Testing in Multilingual Settings) tasks (Armon-Lotem et al. 2015). Sentence Repetition Tasks (SRT), when build up according to the LITMUS principles (Marinis & Armon-Lotem 2015) make a distinction between TD and SLI by targeting cross-linguistically complex structures including object questions, subject or object relatives which are known to be difficult for children with SLI. Additionally, structures which are particularly difficult in German such as topicalization or sentence brackets are included (Clahsen 1991, Lein et al. 2016). Since the task relies on prior knowledge of the target language the SRT can lead to mixed results in late successive typically developing bilinguals (IBi-TDs), especially when they only have a short period of exposure to the target language (Marinis & Armon-Lotem 2015, Fleckstein et al. 2016).

In this longitudinal study, results on SRT of two IBi-TDs (7;0-9;0 (T1) years) with varying length of exposure (T1: LoE=12 months, T2: LoE=18 months, T3: LoE=27 months) are compared to those of age-matched monolinguals with SLI (Mo-SLIs) (7;2-8;11). The German SRT comprises 45 items of varying length and complexity. It is scored by identical repetition and “target structure met” which disregards lexical substitutions and repetitively made case errors.

Results based on quantitative analysis only do not disentangle late child bilingualism and SLI, even after 18 months of exposure. When disregarding erroneous case and gender-marking IBi-TDs’ results resemble those of other TD-populations at T2. The two children perform above the cutoff of 52.2% (Hamann& Abed Ibrahim 2017) at T3 only. A closer look at their performance reveals that structures which rely on case remain difficult after 27 months when a non-canonical word order is targeted.

## References

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