

Development of tense markers in typically developing Kannada English sequential bilinguals

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Abstract

The majority of children across the globe grow up speaking more than one language. Even in India due to a wide range of diversity children get exposed to different languages simultaneously or sequentially. The present study aims to profile the acquisition of tense markers in typically developing Kannada-speaking children learning English as a second language. A total of 30 typically developing bilingual children were taken from age 5.6 to 6.6 (G1), 6.7 to 7.6 (G2), and 7.7 to 8.6 (G3). One-way ANOVA with post hoc Bonferroni adjustment was done to find the significant correlation. There was no significant difference between the groups for the simple present tense in Kannada as well as English. Whereas, in the simple past tense, results revealed there was a significant difference between the languages across groups. The subsequent post hoc Bonferroni adjustment revealed a highly significant difference between Kannada and English in G1 and G2. However, the statistical significance was also seen in G3. Similar results were found in the simple future tense, there was a significant difference between the languages across groups. There is a highly significant difference between Kannada and English in G1 and G2. The statistical significance was also seen in G3; however, the performance was better in English when compared to Kannada. From the above results, we can conclude that as there is a certain developmental trend seen in the Kannada – English sequential bilingual. Overall, bilingual performs better in L1 than L2 when tense markers were considered.

Keywords bilingualism, Kannada, language, tenses, sequential bilingual

1. Introduction

Bilingualism is a multifaceted phenomenon. Bilingualism has been broadly viewed as the equal mastery of two languages. Grosjean (2010) defined bilinguals as referring to individuals who make use of two or more languages in daily communication. It has been estimated that the majority of children across the globe grow up speaking more than one language (Tucker, 1998). The children tend to learn more than one language during the developmental period in varied circumstances which gives rise to bilingualism in children.

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Children's early language skills are strongly related to their experiences with language input in the home context, but these bilingual and multilingual children differ from each other in terms of when exposure to each language began, and the sociolinguistic context in which their languages are spoken. (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004; Goldstein, 2004)

Bilingualism is categorized into 2 type's, simultaneous and sequential bilinguals (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004). Simultaneous bilingual children are those who acquire both languages (L1 and L2) at birth or at least before the age of 3 years (de Houwer, 1995; McLaughlin, 1978). These bilingual learners progress through early language milestones using first words and word combinations at the same ages and for similar communicative purposes as children who learn only a single language from birth (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 1997; Petitto et al., 2001; Petitto & Holowka, 2002)

Sequential bilingualism, children acquire a second language after the first language is somewhat established. For many bilingual developers, there is a consistent experience in only a single language (L1) from birth, with L2 learning beginning at some point later in childhood. For these early sequential bilinguals, consistent L2 experience comes only with immersion in educational settings or with increased interactions with the broader community.

Over half of the global population speaks more than one language. The scenario remains even in India adhering to the hallmark of multilingualism. The language development in bilinguals is not the same as monolingual language development (Brebner, McCormack, & Rickard (2016). Some researches indicate that bilingual children can perform many executive control tests in a better way (Bialystok & Martin, 2004). However, some say that bilinguals performed worse than monolinguals (Pearson, 2002). Not just bilingual even with trilingual (Konkani – English – Kannada) it is reported that they followed a different morphological pattern compared to typically developing monolingual English children (Dsouza & Kumaraswamy, 2015). In a disordered population like SLI, in L2 children had a unique profile compared with their monolingual peers (Paradis, 2008). Similarly, CI children were significantly less accurate while using tense than typically developing children (Guo, 2012). Hence many studies have supported that there are some differences in learning a language between bilingual and monolingual.

Many studies have been conducted in bilingualism the current interest is towards the Morpho-syntax. It is the study of grammatical categories or linguistic units that have both morphological and syntactic properties Morphosyntactic aspects includes plural markers, case markers, and PNG markers. In our study, we are mainly concentrating on tense marker acquisition. Tenses are usually manifested by the use of specific forms of verbs; particularly in their conjugation patterns. Basic tenses found in many languages include the past, present, and future. As Speech and language pathologist is responsible for the assessment and intervention of language disorders in children, understanding the normal language development is very important, so that appropriate diagnosis can be made and intervention can be planned.

There were similarities and differences in the error patterns in English past tense morphology in typically developing children and children with language impairment in sequential bilinguals (Jacobson & Schwartz, 2005). The bilingual children are more accurate with irregular part forms in English than regular (Nicoladis, 2020). As speech and language pathologist is responsible for the assessment and intervention of language disorder in children, understanding the normal language development is very important, so that appropriate diagnosis can be made and intervention can be planned. However, because of the issues related to language learning in a diverse linguistic context, there is a limited understanding of bilingual language acquisition, the continuous increase in urbanization, and the requirement of foreign languages like English. The comparisons on the same linguistic characteristics between two different languages learned/acquired in two different communicative contexts would shed some light on bilingual language development, thereby enabling the clinicians to identify language disorders distinctively and selecting treatment goals more appropriately. Since there are not many studies on Kannada-English bilingual the current study attempts to profile the acquisition of tense markers in typically developing Kannada-speaking children learning English as a second language.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The present study involved a total number of 30 typically developing children studying in regular schools for typically developing with English as a medium of instruction.

Based on the chronological age, the children were further divided into Group 1 (G1) between the age range of 5.6 to 6.6 years, Group 2 (G2) between 6.7 to 7.6 years, and Group 3 (G3) between 7.7 to 8.6 years. All the groups consisted of 10 equal numbers of participants. The demographic details are shown in table 1. The participants were selected based on the following subject selection criteria.

2.2. Subject selection criteria

The children were native speakers of Kannada (L1), which was ascertained through parental interaction.

The selection criteria for the L2 children were that the language spoken at home should be Kannada, the onset of systematic exposure to English should be two years or older, as indicated by school records, and the children should not have any history of speech and/or language delay or impairment. The children's mean exposure to English was 4.3.

All the children were screened for physical, cognitive, social-emotional, sensory, and language development using the WHO disability screening questionnaire. All children were tested by an experienced speech-language pathologist for normal speech and language development in the native language using the combination of assessment of language development till 7.11 years and beyond were tested using linguistic profile test. The children

were reported to have an above-average scholastic performance by class teachers based on academic performance.

Table 1
The demographic details of the participants

Groups	N	The age range in years	Mean age in years
Group 1	10	5.6 to 6.6	5.9
Group 2	10	6.7 to 7.6	6.8
Group 3	10	7.6 to 8.6	7.8

2.3. Stimulus

In the present study, 3 tasks were used, which include picture description task, general conversation, and narration task. The picture description task consists of 30 picture card searches for simple present, simple past, and simple future. The narration task includes a story narration consists of simple present tense, simple past tense, simple future tense. In general conversation, questions were asked regarding the child's daily routines, hobbies, etc. Present study has taken basic tense forms as it found easier for the age groups in the study and past, present and future tenses are the basic tenses found in many languages.

Table 2
The examples of all tenses

Tense forms in Kannada	Examples in Kannada	Examples translated in English
Simple present tense	Hudugi ata adutiddale	Girl is playing
Simple past tense	Hudugi ata adidalu	Girl was playing
Simple future tense	Hudugi ata aduvalu	Girl will play

2.4. Procedure

Data were collected in a quiet situation with to one interaction between subject and SLP. Initially, the tester interacted with the child to create a rapport. Detailed instruction was given to each child. Instructions given was varied depending on the child. During the picture description task child was conditioned with different picture cards before presenting the actual stimulus to elicit the appropriate response. Among 10 sets of picture cards depicting past, present, and future tense, the subject was instructed to explain 'what is going to happen, 'what is happening', and 'what has happened in the picture. Subjects were asked to describe both languages

(Kannada- English). The stimulus was presented to the subjects and each session was recorded using the PRAAT software version (5.2.22).

2.5. Language analysis

In the present study, language samples in typically developing children were recorded and analyzed through the overall guidelines provided by LARSP. The method transcription closely followed the guidelines of the LARSP procedure. Each of the utterances of the therapist and the subject was transcribed. The analyses were done based on LARSP, (Crystal et al, 1976 & 1986; Crystal, 1979). According to this method, the presence of the tense markers in the language sample was marked as '+' and hence scored as 1 if the marker is witnessed in the language sample, whereas the absence of the tense markers was marked as '-' and scored as '0' if there is no tense marker in the language sample.

2.6. Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis for the current study was performed using SPSS (package 16). The raw scores were initially converted into percentage scores and summarized in terms of mean and standard deviation using descriptive statistics. Subsequently, the performance was compared between the groups across the languages and also between the tense markers using one-way ANOVA

3. Findings

3.1. Tense markers in Kannada

3.1.1. Simple Present Tense

The subjects in Group 1, 2, and 3 used the simple present tense. The one-way ANOVA revealed there was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the groups for the simple present tense in Kannada.

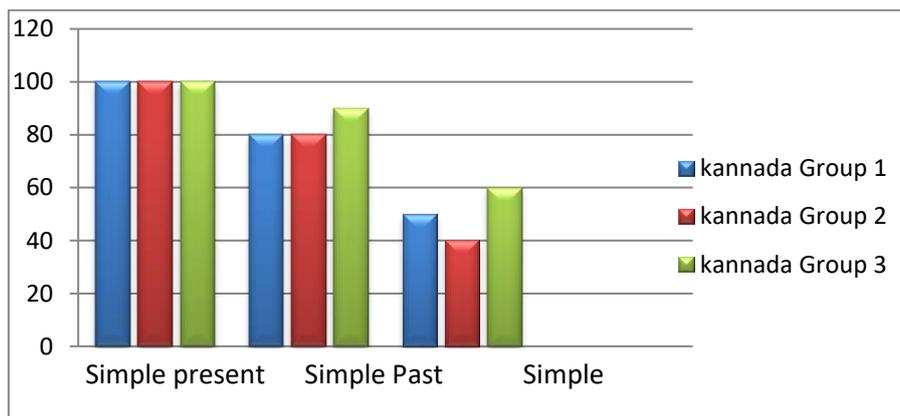


Figure 1. Tense markers in Kannada across the groups

Figure 1 indicates the total number of subjects who used the simple past tense in Kannada across all three groups. The figure indicates that 80% of the subjects in G1 and G2 used the simple past tense in their language

samples. Whereas, G3 had a higher number (90%) of subjects using, simple past tense compared to G1 and G2.

The one-way ANOVA revealed there was a significant difference between the groups ($p < 0.05$). The subsequent post hoc Bonferroni adjustment revealed no significant difference between G1 and G2 ($p > 0.05$) indicating a similar performance. However, there was a significant difference between G1 & G3 ($p = .02$), G2, and G3 ($p = .02$).

3.1.2. Simple Future Tense

Figure 1 depicts the total number of subjects who used the simple future tense in Kannada across all three groups. The figure indicates that 50% of the subjects in G1 and 40% of the subjects in G2 used the simple past tense in their language samples. Whereas, G3 had a higher number (60%) of subjects using, simple past tense compared to G1 and G2.

The one-way ANOVA revealed there was a significant difference between the groups ($p < 0.05$). The subsequent post hoc Bonferroni adjustment revealed a significant difference between G1 and G2 ($p < 0.05$) indicating a similar performance. However, there was a significant difference between G1 & G3 ($p = 0.03$), G2, and G3 ($p = 0.02$).

3.2. Tense markers in English

3.2.1. Simple Present Tense

The one-way ANOVA revealed there was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the groups for the simple present tense in English.

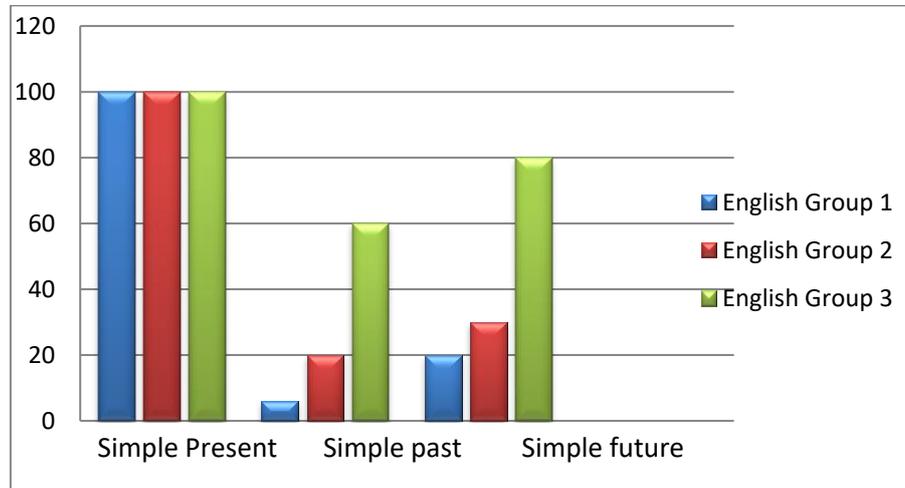


Figure 2. Tense markers in English across the groups

3.2.2. Simple Past Tense

Figure 2 shows the total number of subjects who used the simple past tense in English across all three groups. The figure indicates that 6% of the subjects in G1 and 20% of the subjects in G2 used the simple past tense in their language samples. Whereas, G3 had a higher number (60%) of subjects using, simple past tense compared to G1 and G2.

The one-way ANOVA revealed there was a significant difference between the groups ($p < 0.05$). The subsequent post hoc Bonferroni adjustment revealed a

significant difference between G1 and G2 ($p < 0.05$) indicating a similar performance. However, there was a highly significant difference between G1 & G3 ($p = 0.00$), G2, and G3 ($p = 0.01$).

3.2.3. Simple Future Tense

Figure 2 displays the total number of subjects who used the simple past tense in English across all three groups. The figure indicates that 20% of the subjects in G1 and 30% of the subjects in G2 used the simple future tense in their language samples. Whereas, G3 had a higher number (80%) of subjects using, simple future tense compared to G1 and G2.

The one-way ANOVA revealed there was a significant difference between the groups ($p < 0.05$). The subsequent post hoc Bonferroni adjustment revealed a significant difference between G1 and G2 ($p < 0.05$) indicating a similar performance. However, there was a highly significant difference between G1 & G3 ($p = 0.00$), G2, and G3 ($p = 0.01$).

3.3. The comparison of tense markers between Kannada and English

3.3.1. Simple Present Tense

The one-way ANOVA revealed there was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the groups for the simple present tense in Kannada as well as English.

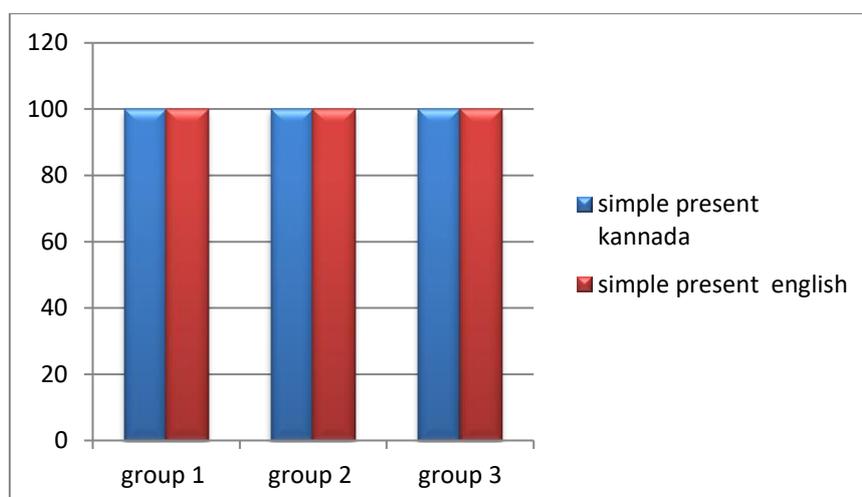


Figure 3. Simple present tense markers in Kannada – English across the groups

3.3.2. Simple Past Tense

The one-way ANOVA revealed there was a significant difference between the languages across groups ($p < 0.05$). The subsequent post hoc Bonferroni adjustment revealed a highly significant difference ($p = 0.00$) between Kannada and English in G1 and G2. However, the statistical significance ($p = 0.03$) was also seen in G3.

The overall mean scores for Kannada are higher than English across all the groups. However, the score difference was found to be higher in G1 whereas G3 had a lesser difference, G2 was intermediate.

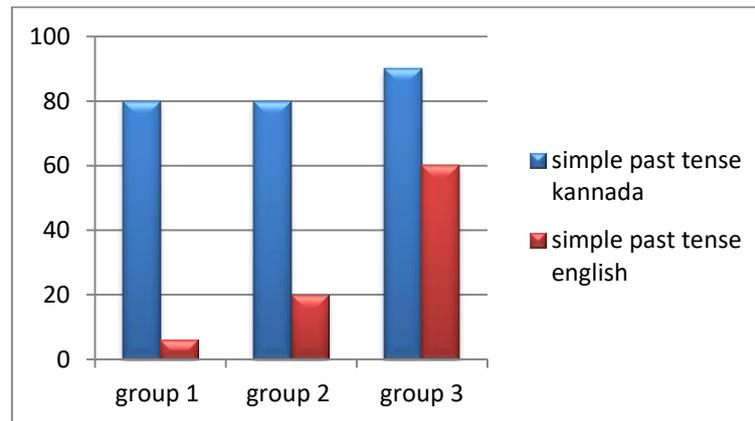


Figure 4. The simple past tense markers in Kannada – English across the groups

3.3.3. Simple Future Tense

The one-way ANOVA revealed there was a significant difference between the languages across groups ($p < 0.05$). The subsequent post hoc Bonferroni adjustment revealed a highly significant difference ($p = 0.00$) between Kannada and English in G1 and G2. The statistical significance ($p = 0.03$) was also seen in G3; however, the performance was better in English when compared to Kannada.

The overall mean scores for Kannada are higher than English in G1 and G2. However, the score difference was found to be higher in G1 and G2 was intermediate, whereas G3 showed a different trend in the difference. In G3, the overall mean score was higher for English than in Kannada.

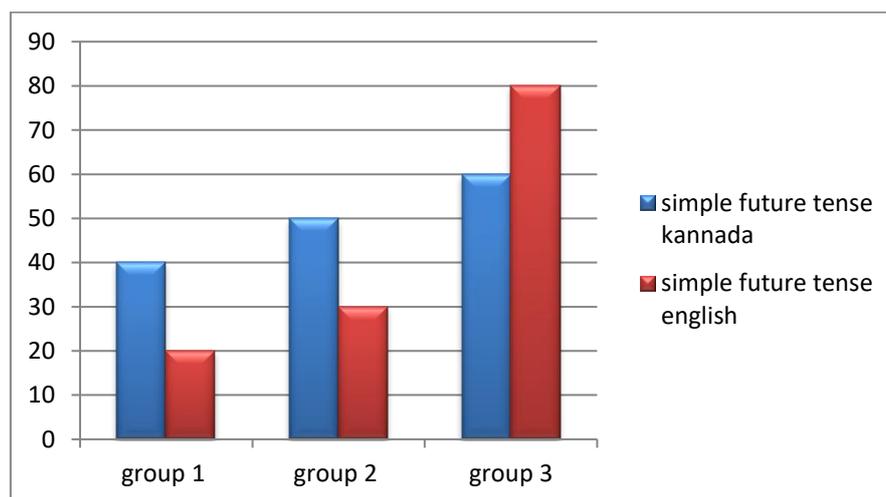


Figure 5. Simple future tense markers in Kannada – English across the group

4. Discussion

It is widely assumed that when L2 learners produce tense forms those native speakers of the target language (L2/English) would produce will not be the

same. This is because and must be the influence of the learner's first language. However, research on second language acquisition has moved from this basic assumption as well as from the assumption that similarities and differences between a speaker's native language (L1) and the target second language (L2) alone are sufficient in acquiring the L2.

The present study aimed to profile the acquisition of tense markers in Kannada-speaking children learning English as a second language between age 5.6 years to 8.6 years.

For a simple present tense, there was no significant difference between G1, G2, and G3 in three-way ANOVA with repeated measures in Kannada and English Language. This indicates the development of simple present tense marker in Kannada as well as English is similar, showing early acquisition which is similar to the result found by Subbarao (1995), Vijayalaxmi (1981), and Sreedevi (1976).

In simple past, tense G1 performed poorly than G2 & G3 in Kannada & English, which shows the acquisition of the past tense is not complete in the younger group and it continues to develop as the age advances, in both the languages. The results demonstrated a higher number of simple past tense usage in Kannada when compared to English within the same group of individuals, indicating better acquisition in L1 than L2 which is delayed

Similarly, the results of the future tense also show that G1 performed poorly than G2 & G3 in Kannada & English, which shows the acquisition of the future tense is not acquired completely in the younger group and it continues to develop into the higher group where the higher group performed well above than the other two groups even then the acquisition is not complete.

The performance between the languages is compared in the study which shows that L2 performances are poorer than the L1 in all the age groups and as the age increased, the ability to use correct tense forms has been improved which is similar to the result obtained by (Santhana & Kumaraswamy 2015).

5. Conclusions

From the above results, we can conclude that as there is a developmental trend seen in the Kannada – English sequential bilinguals and as the tense markers acquired in the different patterns the developmental norms need to be established for the Indian context. These normative data are essential when determining the acquisition in bilingual children with a language learning disability. And these data can be implemented in the assessment of the language disordered population and further in the intervention.

6. Implications

There are several implications for professionals working with bilingual children from based upon the results of this study. It has been demonstrated that there is no minimal information on the production of English tense marker in Kannada – English bilingual children. The results of the present investigation provide such information for professionals when assessing English language development in bilingual children. Often

assessments are used in which the normative information is based upon monolingual development. However, development milestones of language cannot be assumed to follow the same pattern across languages (Bedore & Pena, 2008). Though, the results of this study suggest that the assessment of English tense marker productions of bilingual Kannada- English children may not provide an accurate description of children's abilities when based upon monolingual English norms.

The results of this study revealed that the English tense markers are not mastered in these bilinguals, as monolingual English development. In addition, the results of this investigation provide important reference points for typical English tense markers acquisition of preschool, Kannada-English children. The development of appropriate milestones in language development and the consideration of how both languages, in bilingual acquisition interact or influence each other will provide a basis for the improvement of assessment of bilingual children.

7. Limitations and future directions

The present study entailed only 10 subjects in each Group, which limits it to generalize the study results into a huge population with the same linguistic environment. More controlled stimulus elicitation needs to be employed to maintain uniformity in the sample acquired. To study the development accurately in Kannada-English sequential bilingual, duration of exposure, the time of exposure should be considered.

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