

Theodoros Marinis

'Acquiring definite and indefinite articles across languages and groups: L2 children, children with SLI and children with Autism Spectrum Disorders'

In this talk I will present data from four studies looking at how monolingual, sequential bilingual (L2) children with typical language development, children with Specific Language Impairment (SLI) and children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) acquire definite and indefinite articles. Accurate use of articles requires acquisition of the syntactic properties of articles (e.g. their distribution in the specific language), but also acquisition of discourse/pragmatics (e.g., the use of articles to express old/new information), to name just a few important factors that determine their accurate use. In this talk I will present cross-linguistic data on the acquisition of English, Dutch, and Greek articles by L2 children, children with SLI, and children with ASD. The results will show that the acquisition of articles relies on a range of factors: 1) the properties of the language that is being acquired (and the properties of the first language in the case of the L2 children); 2) the nature of the language impairment (in the children with SLI and ASD); and 3) the results depend on the type of task used and the experimental design. These have important implications for study design and interpretation of results when multiple factors (e.g., syntax, discourse/pragmatics) are at play.