

ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: Influence of the Linguistic Context on the Comprehension of Complex Sentences

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DEGREE: Master of Arts

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DATE: May 2022

PAGES: 16

Children's second language acquisition and the factors that influence their proficiency is an expanding topic of interest among researchers. Studies have covered topics such as home language input, societal interactions, classroom influences, and language of instruction. Other research has centered on the comprehension of specific linguistic structures and the requisite skills. A considerable amount of the data is acquired from sample populations of bilingual students living in America, attending an English immersive school. The current study compared language comprehension scores between kindergarteners attending school in the greater Boston area and kindergarteners attending school in the greater Santa Cruz area. The research sought to answer the following questions: Is there a difference in comprehension of sentences between English learners in America and English learners in Bolivia? Do the children struggle with certain syntactic constructions more than others? If the schools differ in scores, with which linguistic structures does each school struggle with most? Are the structures with which the students struggle similar? The results showed that the children attending school in the greater Boston area scored significantly higher on the test than the children attending school in the greater Santa Cruz area. The study began a preliminary analysis of the sentences to further understand what syntactic structures the children struggled with most. No pattern of specific constructs emerged. However, the children in both schools struggled with the same sentences and excelled with the same

sentences. We propose that a more thorough investigation of sentence structure will provide an improved model of education when addressing the unique opportunities of teaching second language learners.