An Investigation of an Early Bilingual Child: Phonological Development at its Finest?

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to explore and examine an early bilingual child whose use of English might be different on the account of the context the child uses English. Specifically, it was sought to find out if the child resorted to different phonological varieties as well as different interaction patterns while communicating. The relevant data were collected through spontaneous speech samples while the bilingual child was playing games with one of his care-takers and through a questionnaire filled out by two English-speaking native-speakers, where they intuitively judged the child on a phonological basis. The scrutiny of the data revealed that there were times where the child sounded more like his monolingual English-speaking peers; however, there was also evidence claiming the opposite, meaning the child used the language in different ways and accommodated to his Philippine nanny. Also, the questionnaire completed by the native-speakers indicated that there were some cases where they thought the bilingual child was closer to the near-native end of the spectrum and vice-versa.

Keywords: Early bilingualism, phonological development, bilingual accommodation, L2 alignment, different varieties of English

Introduction

When learning a new language, although it is thought to be significant not only to learn its words and grammar, but also to learn its sounds, and, as the frequent errors both in perception and production prove (i.e., the unattainable near-native competence in pronunciation), this is not an easy task. Relying on work on second language learning, especially studies involving adult learners, we come to know that, when listening to L2 speech, inexperienced learners seem to use the phonemic categories of their L2 to impose phonemic structure on it. To this end, dual language acquisition in early childhood may be said to differ from adults' learning in that in adults all categories are fully specified, whereas, children may still be able to modify their initial construction. Thus,

in the phonological domain of language acquisition, the question of how phonemic categories, which are different from child's maternal language, are fixed is an important one. More specifically, if a child learns the values of a certain phoneme in his/her maternal language, what happens if he or she learns two languages in which that phoneme has different physical properties is a question to be posed and how it is affected by some societal factors both at macro and micro levels is yet another issue needing to be dealt with meticulously. Such being the case, delving into the issue and gaining more insights into how this process happens, a simultaneous bilingual child's phonological acquisition would have to, if none, provide information that might help perceive early bilingualism more thoroughly.

Literature review

Phonological development of early bilinguals

Whether bilingual individuals acquiring two languages simultaneously develop one mixed or two completely independent linguistic systems has attracted much scholar attention in bilingual acquisition literature (Bhatia & Ritchie, 1999; McLaughlin, 1984). The possibility that bilingualism may have facilitating impacts on children's metalinguistic awareness development was first proposed by Vygotsky (1962). Much research to date has explored this idea, laying a particular emphasis on children's word awareness and syntactic awareness. The results have been mixed, but the majority of published studies have reported an advantage for bilingual children (Bialystok, 1986, 1988; Bowey & Patel, 1988; Cummins, 1978; Edwards & Christophersen, 1988; Galambos & Goldin-Meadow, 1990; Yelland, Pollard, & Mercuri, 1993). Similarly, a growing number of children all across the globe grow up being exposed to more than one language, yet the course of language development in bilingual children is not well-described or understood (McCardle & Hoff, 2006). A large body of research has refuted the once-held view that dual language exposure confuses children (e.g. Haugen, 1987). That said, children exposed to dual languages simultaneously can actually learn them with no difficulties and can differentiate these languages with ease in terms of their two varying phonological, lexical, and morphological systems (Kovacs & Mehler, 2009; Petitto et al., 2001). Nonetheless, it is not clear whether children exposed to the two languages typically acquire them at the same rate and pace as their monolingual peers learn one. Another issue vis-à-vis simultaneous bilingual development is the notion that whereas the child's linguistic systems are developed separately, one language might as well influence the other (Yip & Matthews, 2007; Soriente, 2007), which is referred to as cross-linguistic influence (Adnyani & Pastika, 2016), that is, transfer and interference are also factors affecting the process of language development of bilinguals.

When it comes down to phonological development, it would have to

be rather wise to state that findings are best regarded as tentative owing to "the relative paucity of studies in this domain'' (McCardle & Hofff, 2006, p. 50) and the diversity of issues examined by existent studies in the literature. Studies with simultaneous bilingual children in the verbal stage of development indicate that they exhibit language specific patterns of production (Johnson & Lancaster, 1998; Paradis, 1996, 2001). A study by Brown and Copple (2018) investigating the phonological development of early Spanish-English bilingual speakers sought to elucidate whether these speakers develop a separate phonological system for English, and, if so, the role of primary and secondary cues in development of the second language. In this regard, the researchers analysed the phonetic realisation of the voiceless stops /p/, /t/, /k/ amongst three groups: early Spanish-English bilinguals; L1 English speakers who are late learners of Spanish; and L1 Spanish speakers who are late learners of English. The participants engaged in a reading task and a conversation task in each language during a single recording session. Following the data collection, there were 1,578 tokens of /p/, /t/, /k/ and they were analysed using acoustic software. Upon finishing up the analysis of the relevant data, it was seen that two phonological systems develop amongst early bilingual speakers, with varying degrees of assimilation to the phonological systems of the native speakers of each language.

Bilingual accommodation

In the context of dialects in contact, it is well recognized that speakers may adapt their speech in differing ways in response to the varieties spoken by other interlocutors around them. Speakers may alter their rate of use of particular phonetic variants in a way which allows them either to bring their own frequency of use closer to that of their interlocutors or, conversely, to increase the difference between them. As is discussed in more depth within the relevant literature on Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (e.g. Coupland, Coupland, Giles, & Henwood, 1988; Giles, 1984), such alterations and changes might as well be seen as demonstrating the speaker's wish to converge with or diverge from their interlocutor(s) in order to "seek approval" or demonstrate social psychological distance respectively (Llamas, Watt, & Johnson, 2009). To be precise, CAT was introduced by Giles in 1971 as a development of "social psychological research on similarity attraction" (Giles & Powesland, 1975, p. 233). Individuals can gain favourability with others by converging to their speech style, intentionally speaking more like the other; they can create distance by diverging from the other, intentionally speaking differently from the other; or they can maintain their status by continuing in their normal speech patterns (Vincze, Gasiorek, & Dragojevic, 2017). In a bilingual setting, however, convergence, divergence and maintenance are most clearly seen in the language that the speaker chooses to use. When applied to bilingualism, this theory suggests that someone's

language choice may be influenced by one interlocutor trying to make him- or herself seem either similar to or different from the other interlocutor by intentionally choosing to use or not to use the other's preferred language.

CAT was first applied to bilingualism following the theory's origination in 1970s in a study where it was sought to examine the impact of the perceived motives of accommodation between bilingual speakers (Simard, Taylor, & Giles, 1976). The researchers found out that if the listener thinks that the speaker adopts the language of him or her, this is likely to evoke positive attitudes and the listener can make an effort to accommodate back to the initiator; however, if such accommodation is attributed to external pressures, then it is unlikely for the individual to return the accommodation (Simard, Taylor, & Giles, 1978). Recent research into bilingualism in situations that have a majority and a minority language bears similarities to other studies which revealed that language competence often thwarts someone's efforts to converge or diverge (e.g**.,** Gasiorek & Vincze, 2016; Vincze, Gasiorek, & Dragojevic, 2017).

Alignment in L2 dialogue

Alignment is defined by Costa, Pickering, and Sorace (2008) as the process of aligning with the structures, sounds and lexis as used during the verbal interaction between two interlocutors. Such being the case, there might as well be examples of alignment in a second language learning context where interlocutors from varying backgrounds are present, meaning non-native speakers of a language speaking the same language might align with each other at any linguistic level in the hopes of, possibly, feeling more comfortable. With respect to linguistic alignment at the level of pronunciation, researchers have shown that native-speaking interlocutors converge on common phonetic realisations of sounds in individual words, with such convergence occurring early on in the conversation and persisting for at least one week after the initial conversation (Pardo, 2006). Native-speaking interlocutors sharing the same dialect are also more likely to converge on common phonetic and prosodic speech patterns than interlocutors with distinct dialects, suggesting that convergence is facilitated when interlocutors share a common linguistic background (Kim, Horton, & Bradlow, 2011; Pardo, Jay, & Krauss, 2010). Alignment can occur even for speech that is only seen, with listeners showing convergence for words that they heard and for words that they lipread from a silent video recording of a speaker (Miller, Sanchez, & Rosenblum, 2010). Alignment in native speakers thus seems to be a rapid interactional phenomenon, reflective of a human perceptual system which easily adapts to recent experience (Samuel & Kralijc, 2009).

However, linguistic alignment at the level of speech and pronunciation is not solely a cognitive phenomenon. For example, according to accommodation theory, interlocutors converge (or diverge) on shared

linguistic behaviours during social interaction as a function of their beliefs, attitudes, and sociocultural conditions (Giles & Ogay, 2007). In this regard, despite the overall interest in alignment as a conversational phenomenon, there is still paucity of research investigating alignment in non-native communication. This might be because existing studies of alignment in non-native speakers have predominantly involved interactions between native-speaking interlocutors and L2 learners, showing that extent of alignment may depend on L2 learners' degree of accent (Kim et al., 2011) and individual differences in their cognitive abilities (Lewandowski, 2009). For instance, compared to learners with either strong or weak accents, only moderately-accented learners appear to show convergence in pronunciation with a native-speaking interlocutor (Kim et al., 2011). Assuming that accent ratings capture some aspects of L2 speaking proficiency, phonetic convergence may depend on learners' mastery of the L2 phonetic system and their perception of the interlocutor's communicative needs. Simply put, individuals whose accents are particularly non-native may not have the linguistic means to align with their interlocutor, while those with native-like accents may not perceive the need to align because communication is not compromised (Kim et al., 2011).

Based upon the literature reviewed above, to the best of our knowledge, there is not much research examining early bilinguals whose use of English might be different on the account of the context the child uses English (e.g. societal factors), viz., in order to find out if early bilingual children resort to different phonological varieties as well as different interaction patterns while engaging in communication. Such being the case, the purpose of the current study is to investigate if the child resorts to a mechanism enabling him to interact with English-speaking people in an informal setting (e.g. his home environment) in differing ways. To this end, the study might contribute to the theoretical understanding of early bilingualism.

Aim of the study

Based on the impetus for the study discussed above, the primary purpose of this study is to investigate an early bilingual child whose use of English might be different on the account of the context the child uses English. Specifically, it was sought to find out if the child resorts to different phonological varieties as well as different interaction patterns while communicating with people whose use of English presumably differs from each other. To this end, this study might as well help re-define bilingualism owing to the aforementioned discussion. In line with this goal, the following research questions are addressed:

(1) To what extent does the early bilingual child use prosodic features effectively?

(2) How does the use of these features interact with exposure to multiple varieties of language use?

Methodology

Research design

A mixed method approach employing quantitative and qualitative elements was utilised in this study. Given the purpose of the present study, the rationale for such a design is to provide a deeper comprehension for and to triangulate quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire and with qualitative data gathered through audio-recordings.

Bilingual context of the child

The participating child, Ahmet (a pseudonym), is a four-year-old bilingual child who was born in the USA and lived there for one year and who, then, moved back to Turkey. He is enrolled at a nursery school where he is taught exclusively in English. More specifically, Ahmet is the first-born child of a Turkish family; however, his father completed most of his studies abroad (i.e. the UK & the USA), whereas, his mother received formal education in Turkey and her command of English, compared to her husband, is relatively lower. In this regard, Ahmet has been exposed to both English and Turkish from birth, that is, he might be thought of as a simultaneous bilingual. For the time being, he is being exposed to English both formally and informally; in his home environment, he has got two nannies (one Philippine, one American) and his father whose command of English might be considered to be rather good and all these people speak with him in English.

Data collection procedures

For the purposes of the current study, the relevant data were collected both through audio-taped, naturally occurring interactions/conversations that the participating child had with his Philippine-origin nannies and through a questionnaire filled out by two native-speakers, one of whom is originally from the USA, whereas, the other one is from the UK. More specifically, the audio-taped data included spontaneous speech samples collected while the child was playing with toys in the company of his care-taker.

As for the questionnaire, the native speakers i.e. Ns1, Ns2) were asked to fill out a Likert-type scale ranging from one to five (i.e. 5 standing for "near-native)" on an intuitive basis by listening to four different speech samples chosen by the researchers. These native speakers are from the UK and the USA respectively, who have been involved in English Language Teaching both in EFL and ESL settings. Having completed their undergraduate and graduate studies in English Language education, both have

worked in a variety of countries (e.g., England, America, Japan, China, Spain, Turkey) at different levels (e.g., secondary & tertiary mostly) with students from various backgrounds. As such, they are qualified to evaluate the participating child's phonological features. In the questionnaire we mainly focused on supra-segmental features of English given that such features of the language are thought to be relatively more important in terms of phonological intelligibility (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Dikilitaş & Geylanioğlu, 2011). Specifically, the questionnaire consisted of items evaluating the child's speech samples, such as "the speaker produces vowels …", "the speaker produces the consonants …", "the speakers produces the -s endings …" , "the speaker produces -d endings …", and the like, all of which are concerned with supra-segmental features of English.

Data analysis procedures

The qualitative data for the current study came from audio-recorded spontaneous speech samples collected while the child was playing with his toys in the company of his Philippine-origin care-taker. The audio-taped speech samples were 98 minutes in length and contained 578 utterances produced by the child. The speech samples then were transcribed into textual forms to be studied using an inductive approach to data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An iterative process of reading through the data was initiated by both of the researchers so as to thickly describe the data at hand as it is known to be usual to move back and forth between data collection, data analysis and data interpretation (Dörnyei, 2007). As such, the transcribed speech samples were analysed with the help of International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) by listening to the samples as well as transcribing these samples using IPA with regard to common phonetic and prosodic features of the utterances produced by the child and the care-taker. Having analysed the relevant data individually, we negotiated the final form of categories through peer debriefing, sharing our thoughts regarding the interpretation process in order to ensure validation as well as establish the credibility of the study (Spall, 1998). We also asked two native English speakers, each of whom are respectively from the UK and the USA, to listen to the chosen speech samples so as to ensure the sounds they identified were similar to what we had identified. Detailed coding and analysis were performed until after it was felt that no further useful categories would emerge within the data. To this end, the themes fell into two main categories; near-nativeness and non-nativeness and the relevant samples were analysed and introduced by referring to the IPA.

As for the analysis of the quantitative data, responses to the questionnaire were entered to SPSS version 22.0. Moreover, so as to find out if the data were normally distributed, the Shapiro Wilk Test was deployed on the responses provided by the native-speakers and the relationship between two continuous variables (i.e. both native speakers separately) was

investigated utilising the Spearman's rank correlation test.

Results

The study aimed to find out how a simultaneous bilingual child exposed to different varieties of the English language are affected by phonological diversity. Therefore, through the detailed analysis of the audio transcripts, it was revealed that the child actually resorts to different varieties of English.

Bilingual child's production of prosodic features

To begin with, the Shapiro Wilk Test was deployed on the responses provided by the native-speakers so as to find out if the data were normally distributed, and the relationship between two continuous variables (i.e. both native speakers separately) was investigated utilising the Spearman's rank correlation test. Significance level was set to $p<0.05$.

Table 1
Native-speakers' perceptual judgement on the child's use of prosodic features

Item	Ns1 (N=9)						Ns2 (N=9)					
	Mean	SD	Median	Minimum	Maximum	IQR	Mean	SD	Median	Minimum	Maximum	IQR
Score	4.00	0.707	4	3	5	0.5	4.22	0.972	5	3	5	2

As is evident from Table 1, the average of the mean scores and deviation based on the responses given by the Ns1 was found to be $(\bar{X}_{T1} = 4.00;\ SD_{T1} = 0.707)$. However, the average of the mean scores and deviation based on the responses given by the Ns2 was found to be $(\bar{X}_{T2} = 4.22;\ T2 = 0.972)$, which means the Ns2 rated the bilingual child to be on the "near-native" end of the spectrum compared to the Ns1.

Figure 1 revealed that the item for which the Ns1 scored more than the Ns2 was "the speaker speaks in a natural rhythm". Both of the raters scored the same in 4 other items, which are "the speakers produces the -s ending (e.g. Americans, relationships)", "the speakers uses emphatic stress to indicate key words, contrasts, etc.", "the speaker's tone rises and falls in appropriate places", "the speakers pauses at commas and other appropriate places". However, it was also seen that the Ns2 scored more in all the other items. To this end, the results also revealed that the participating bilingual child produced prosodic features appropriately at a suprasegmental level and there is considerable variability in his ability to mark such features as was reflected by the native-speakers' perceptual judgements.

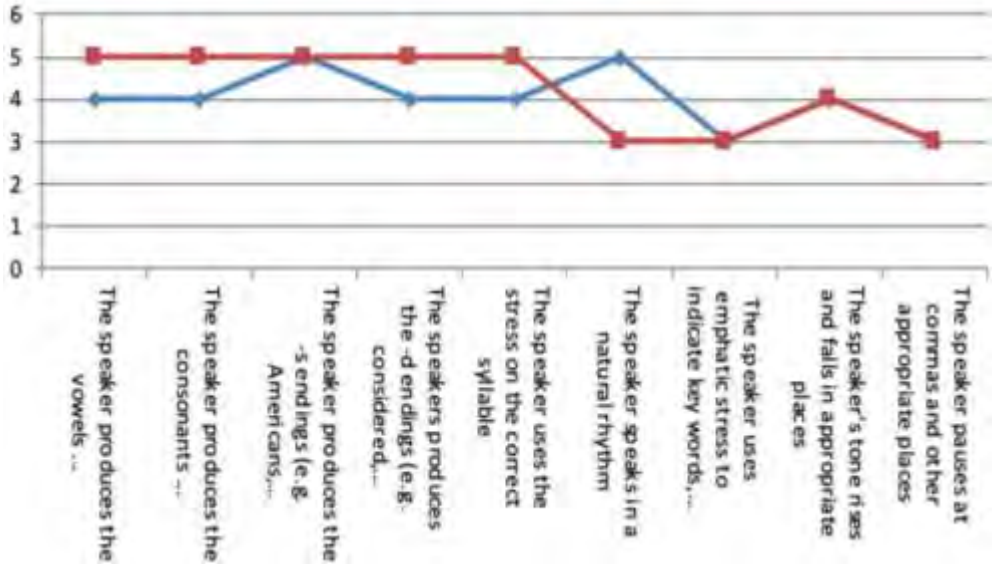

Figure 1. Distribution of items by the raters

Exposure to multiple varieties of language use

The findings of the transcribed speech samples were analysed under two main categories, namely, near-nativeness and non-nativeness.

Near-nativeness

Ahmet used a number of phonological processes common to monolingual English-speaking children. To be precise, there were suprasegmental elements evident in his speech, such as the rising and falling intonation, stress, and word juncture. However, one thing that was quite surprising was that Ahmet pronounced some words like an individual from the UK would do so, whereas some others like an individual from the USA would do as can be seen in the following:

But all is 10 liras, even the sheep and the goats
[/ bʌt ***ɔːl*** ɪz ten ˈlɪə.rəz, ˈiː.vᵊn ðə ʃiːp ənd ***goʊt*** /]

As is obvious from the above given example, Ahmet made use of different phonological processes pertaining to different varieties of the English language, which indicates that being exposed to various Englishes might have an impact on the way he speaks the language.

Moreover, it was quite apparent that Ahmet produced some sounds that might be thought of as challenging for his monolingual Turkish-speaking peers who learns the target language successively as is seen in Excerpt 1:

Excerpt 1

… *if you press this button, it'll go very high.*

[/ ɪf jʊ pres ***ðɪs*** ˈbʌt̬.ᵊn ɪt.ᵊl goʊ ver.i haɪ /]

Based on the above given phonetic transcription of the sentence, it was seen that a fricative consonant sound known as /ð/ and which is also considered to be a rather difficult sound for Turkish-speaking individuals to produce is pronounced quite appropriately by Ahmet, which is also supported by the findings gathered through the questionnaire.

The spontaneous speech elicited when Ahmet was playing a game with his caretaker unearthed that he acquired approximants and nasals as well as the schwa sound in a manner that his monolingual English-speaking peers would do so as can be seen in Excerpt 2:

Excerpt 2

... a little bit naughty that's why he makes his daddy fall down

[/ ***ə*** lɪt.ᵊl bɪt ˈnɔː.ti, ***ð***æts waɪ hi meɪks hɪz dæd.i fɔːl daʊn /]

Excerpt 2 shows that Ahmet is adept at acquiring the phonemes accurately and can actually produce these sounds while speaking in English, that is to say, his articulatory distortion of sounds like /ə/, /ð/, /æ/ was quite identical to those of English-speaking children, which is also supported by the responses provided by English native-speakers to the questionnaire.

The findings also reported that Ahmet pronounced some words with an American accent whereas some others with a British one as is seen in Excerpt 3:

Excerpt 3

… *then the goat die on the water.*

[/ ðen ðə goʊt daɪ ɑːn ðə ˈwɑː.t̬ɚ/]

The way Ahmet said "water" was completely similar to those who speak the language with an American accent, which proves that he has been influenced by his care-taker and his teachers at school who are from the USA. This finding also reveals that Ahmet resorts to different phonological varieties when speaking in English.

Non-nativeness

Another apparent finding revealed from the transcriptions and audios was that Ahmet drew on some other varieties of the English language. Specifically speaking, he has been exposed to the language spoken by different interlocutors all of whom have got their own way of uttering sentences and producing relevant sounds. Such being the case and given that Ahmet spends most of his time with his Philippine-origin care-taker, it was quite obvious

that this affected his pronunciation in a way which can be referred to as non-native. Excerpt 4 demonstrates the aforesaid finding:

Excerpt 4

They are making a song. They are singing a song.
[/ ðeɪ ɑːr ˈ**meɪkɪŋ*k*** ə sɑːŋ. ðeɪ ɑːr **sɪŋɪŋ*k*** ə sɑːŋ /]

Ahmet seemed to have acquired the nasal / ŋ / in a way that his care-taker produces the sound itself, to wit; rather than omitting the /k/ sound at the end of "making" and "singing", in both cases he pronounced the words as /***sɪŋɪŋk***/ and /ˈ***meɪkɪŋk***), meaning not only does he resort to what is known "Standard English" per se, but he also produces sounds pertaining to different varieties of the language, which, in this case, is Philippine-oriented English as is in Excerpt 5 by Ahmet's care-taker:

Excerpt 5

... I'm going to have so much fun
[/ aɪˈem **goʊ·ɪŋ*k***ˌtə hæv soʊ mʌtʃ fʌn/]

Excerpt 5 illustrates how Ahmet's care-taker produces the nasal / ŋ / with which Ahmet seems to have aligned with in the hopes of possibly feeling more comfortable to keep the conversation going. Yet another finding revealing that Ahmet at certain points sounded more like a non-native English speaker was related to the pronunciation of long / iː/ and short / ɪ / as is exemplified in Excerpt 6:

Excerpt 6

Ahmet: *But you put like this?*
[/ bʌt jʊ pʊt laɪk ***ðɪːs*** /]
Care-taker: *Yes, we put it like this.*
[/jes wi pʊt laɪk ***ðɪːs*** /]

The way Ahmet pronounced the word "this" was quite similar to his care-taker's way of pronouncing the same word – the short /ɪ/ becoming a long one. This finding brings to the light that Ahmet being exposed more than one variety is affected by what he hears around him, which also indicates that he is still in the process of developing his phonological awareness and inventory and he accommodates to other interlocutors speaking the same language.

To conclude, scrutiny of all the data and the careful analysis of the findings suggest that a simultaneous bilingual child being exposed to more than one variety of the English language is affected what he hears spoken around him both in informal settings (e.g. his home environment) and formal settings (e.g. school environment). Besides, given that he is still in the process of developing his phonological awareness and inventory, he resorts to different phonological varieties as well as different interaction patterns. In this

regard, it might as well be concluded that the child developed a mechanism which enables him to shuttle between differing varieties of English. To this end, the findings of the present study might imply that the phonological development of bilingual children can be reconsidered with reference to the interlocutors interacting with them and the phonological varieties these interlocutors are adopting and using.

Discussion

Bilingual child's use of prosodic features of English

The first research question of the present study aimed to examine the extent to which the bilingual child, Ahmet, used prosodic features effectively. Based on the findings, first and foremost it might be argued that a bilingual child exposed to two languages since birth in the social surrounding might hear English-speaking people resorting to different phonological varieties. By the same token, given that the child himself is still in the process of developing his phonological awareness and inventory, it was apparent that at some points he sounded more like his monolingual English-speaking peers and every now and then the way he spoke the language was more identical to those who acquire the second language in a context where the heritage language is another language other than English. This might indicate that a bilingual child being exposed to both languages in differing ways resorts to a kind of mechanism enabling him to use the language accordingly and which concurs with a body of relevant research studies (e.g., Adnyani & Pastika, 2016). These studies also argue that bilingual children's phonological use of language might be influenced by cross-linguistic differences and the interlocutor use of differing phonological sound system. Also, it would be befitting to suggest, if not evident, that Ahmet's use of English sheds light on the issue that he develops the phonological aspects of English similar to those of his monolingual English-speaking peers, which echoes the findings of some other studies existent in the literature (e.g. Kovacs & Mehler, 2009; Petitto et al., 2001). The findings of the present study also suggested that the child had difficulties in variation in some vowel sounds. As is pointed out by Swan and Smith (2001), /i:/ as in *key* which is often pronounced like the diphthong /ɪə/, or in a closed syllable as /ɪ/ by Turkish speakers, there was related evidence as regards how the child mispronounced some words containing the sounds /i/, which echoes what Swan and Smith (2001) discusses. Also, Swan and Smith (2001) claimed that because voiceless /θ/ and voiced /ð/ do not occur in Turkish, they give a great deal of difficulty and learners often replace them by over-aspirated /t/ and /d/ which was also supported by Demirezen (2003; 2004) who claimed that these two sounds are rather difficult for Turkish EFL students to acquire appropriately; however, it was not the case with the participating bilingual child of the present study, that is, he was quite adept at producing these two sounds unlike his monolingual Turkish-speaking peers.

Exposure to multiple varieties

As for the second research question focusing on Ahmet's exposure to different varieties of the language, the findings of the present study also showed that Ahmet accommodates to other interlocutors (e.g. his care-taker) by converging to their speech style possibly to gain favourability. As such, at the time of speech samples being recorded, Ahmet and his care-taker were playing games and Ahmet might have wanted the game to last even longer, which concurs with a body research studies existent in the literature (e.g. Vincze, Gasiorek, & Dragojevic, 2017). Therefore, it was obvious that Ahmet made use of different prosodic features of the English language

Considering the differences, albeit to a certain degree, in Ahmet's use of English, it might as well be argued that his acquisition of plosives happened to be in a pattern different from monolingual English-speaking children. To be precise, it was seen that Ahmet acquired voiced plosives before their voiceless counterparts, which is why he was observed to be having difficulties in producing voiceless plosives at certain times. However, monolingual English-speaking children usually acquire voiceless plosives prior to voiced plosives (Prather, Hedrick, & Kern, 1975), which might confirm that him being exposed to different kinds of the English language affects his overall phonological attainment. In a similar vein, rhythm, stress and intonation received explicit ratings from the participating native-speakers, all of which indicated that the bilingual child slightly accented guises with more variation in intonation patterns and near-native rhythm were rated more positively by both of the native-speakers, thus; suggesting that nuclear stress and rhythm might actually be instrumental in characterising what is meant by "near-nativeness".

Alignment is defined by Costa et al. (2008) as the process of aligning with the structures, sounds and lexis as used during the verbal interaction between two interlocutors. Such being the case, there might as well be examples of alignment in a second language learning context where interlocutors from varying backgrounds are present, meaning non-native speakers of a language speaking the same language might align with each other at any linguistic level in the hopes of, possibly, feeling more comfortable. That said, there was evidence of alignment in the joint dialogues that the bilingual child had with his Philippine care-taker. As has already been given, alignment can occur at any linguistic level, whether it be lexically, semantically, syntactically, and/or phonologically, making sure that the interlocutors present in the dialogue understand each other with no communication breakdowns (Costa et al., 2008). In this case, the bilingual child presented in this paper might as well be thought to align with his care-taker on a phonological level. Specifically speaking, there were examples of him pronouncing one of the oft-cited sounds of the English language, which is schwa, quite similar to the way his-care taker produces the same sound, which concurs with a body of relevant research into the issue (Kim et al., 2011) who

claims that interlocutors align with respect to their lexical, syntactic, and phonological choices.

However, there are also some limitations that have to be pointed out. This study is limited in its scope since it focused only on one bilingual child without any comparison to any other simultaneous bilingual children acquiring dual languages at the same time. This limitation should be considered in future studies. Besides, it was observed that a deeper appreciation and understanding of bilingualism requires a lot more than what is thought to be explored and/or exploited sufficiently. An early bilingual child being exposed to different varieties of the L2 might also experience some challenges due to cognitive complexity of such exposure; therefore, future studies might as well take this aspect into consideration and examine the challenges experienced while a child is-exposed to different varieties of a language. Simply put, even though there is confidence in the emergent findings of the current study, much research is deemed to be necessary to be able to investigate the issue in more depth thereafter offer more concrete suggestions.

Conclusion

To conclude, the present study aimed to examine an early bilingual child whose use of English might be different on the account of the context the child uses English. In this respect, the findings presented that a simultaneous bilingual child being exposed to English from birth but to different varieties of the language resorts to differing phonological varieties. Better still, given that the child still processes his phonological awareness and inventory alike, it would be rather unwise to gloss over the fact that the more he is exposed to the language in different ways, the more differentiated linguistic repertoire (e.g., phonologically) he might end up with in the future, viz., in order to better see how things change or would be prone to change, much investigation is required. In a nutshell, it would be rather befitting to suggest at this juncture that in the hopes of honing our understanding of early bilingualism and phonological development of bilinguals, much research into the issue is *sine qua non* for more reliable and generalizable results.

Implications

Our study of early bilingual phonological variation is intended to contribute to the respective fields of early bilingualism in monolingual contexts, deepening our understanding of what factors are associated with a simultaneous bilingual child's exposure to different varieties of the English language. The main conclusion drawn from the study is that a simultaneous bilingual child is likely to make use of different phonological features (e.g., mostly at supra-segmental level) if exposed to different varieties of either of the spoken languages. Such variation can be closely attributed to linguistic repertoires of the bilingual child stemming from linguistic exposure. This particular finding

suggests that investigations in early bilingual phonological development could further examine the processes of alignment and accommodation and emphasize the importance of incorporating prosodic features of bilingual children's phonological variation. Similarly, language-specific prosodic sensitivities are apparent in the phonological production of a bilingual child, and thus indicate that bilingual children can accommodate to other interlocuters by making use of their differentiated suprasegmental features. Therefore, there is paramount relevance to the literature focusing on how bilingualism affects children. While acknowledging potential individual differences, we argue that a theoretical model needs to consider the specific monolingual contexts in which bilingual children are raised or educated.

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