

## Through the Chinese looking glass: from bilingual to trilingual development

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This talk demonstrates how a number of new corpora recently created by the Childhood Bilingualism Research Centre (Mai, et al 2024) can be used to address some issues in the development and language shift of heritage and homeland children across diverse contexts. These corpora document the longitudinal development of bilingual and trilingual children in Hong Kong and USA. The Child Heritage Chinese Corpus (CHCC) and Hong Kong Child Mandarin Corpus (HKCMC) will soon be available in CHILDES, allowing us to look at a typologically divergent language pair (Chinese-English) and a typologically close one (Cantonese and Mandarin). They also allow us to extend studies of bilingual development to a more complex trilingual context.

The combination of languages documented in these corpora provides a window through which to investigate the role of typological distance between language pairs. Among the typologically unique features of Chinese is the combination of Verb-Object order and preverbal placement of locative PP. This property proves to be vulnerable to cross-linguistic influence from English which has an invariant postverbal order. Bilingual children overgeneralize the postverbal order, resulting in ungrammatical sentences in Cantonese (Yip and Matthews 2007) and Mandarin (Deng and Mai 2024). For the typologically close languages Cantonese and Mandarin with overlapping constructions such as the pretransitive construction, facilitative transfer from Mandarin BA to Cantonese *zoengl* is observed in a trilingual child.

Another set of issues concerns children's code-mixing. In both the bilingual and trilingual corpora, code-mixed utterances prove to be more complex than single-utterances in either language as measured by Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) (Lai et al. in preparation). Interactions between MLU and age show that the complexity advantage of mixed utterances increases with age. We interpret these findings from the perspective of translanguaging (Li 2018) as a positive view on language mixing.

### References:

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