

Background

Language support at preschool age and its sustainable effects play an increasingly important role in German educational institutions. This topic is highly debated, especially with regard to language development of multilingual children who grow up in heterogeneous language environments with different language combinations (Beller et al. 2009; Egert & Hopf 2016; Ehlich, Valtin & Lütke 2012; Gasteiger-Klicpera, Knapp & Kucharz 2010; Lisker 2011; Schneider et al. 2013).

Does continuous language support at preschool age have effects on the acquisition of literacy in primary school in L2 German of bilingual children in comparison to other multilingual and monolingual children?

Longitudinal design

BIVEM Study design:

- M1 = integrative language support**
 - Training measures for educators who provide language support for children throughout the whole day
- M2 = additive language support**
 - Additional training in small groups (max. 6 children, 30 min. twice a week, 4 months in each cycle)

→ **M1 and M2 build the bilingual BIVEM group**

M0 = control group

- No additional language support in the framework of the BIVEM study
- **M0 is part of the multilingual group**

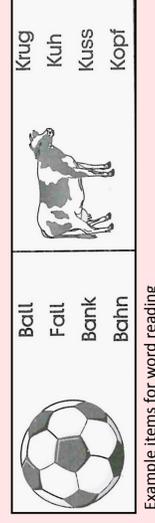
Primary school

Reading task (ELFE 1-6; Lenhard, Schneider & Schneider, 2006)

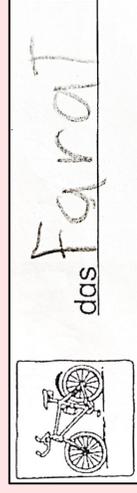
- Separate subtests for word, sentence and text comprehension

Spelling task (HSP; May, 2002)

- Single words and sentences (nr. of correct words and graphemes)



Example items for word reading



Example item "Fahrrad" (bike) from word spelling test

Conclusions

- The group of bilingual children who received language support (during the BIVEM study) tended to show better results in all subtests of the reading task and in the spelling task than the multilingual group (although the effect was not significant).
- In addition, this group did not differ significantly from monolinguals in any task, whereas the group of multilinguals did differ significantly in the spelling task in nr. of correct words scored.

Does early language support in bilinguals bring sustainable effects on literacy acquisition in school?

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Sample

3 investigated groups

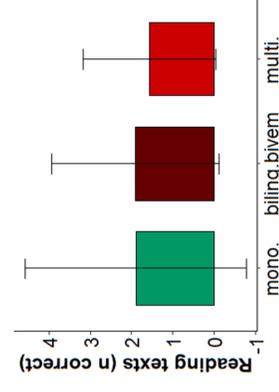
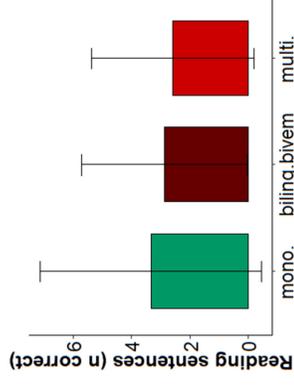
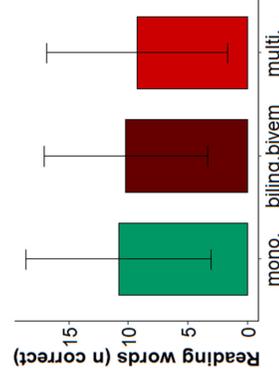
- Monolingual** (children with L1 German only)
- Bilingual BIVEM** (children with L1 Russian or Turkish and L2 German who received language support 3 years in a row prior to school)
- Multilingual** (children with various L1s from the same schools as bilingual BIVEM)

Investigated Groups	Nr. (girls/boys)	Age (SD)
Monolingual	59 (30/29)	90;2 (6;6)
Bilingual BIVEM	35 (16/19)	84;8 (4;5)
Multilingual	78 (38/40)	88;4 (6;0)

Results (1st grade)

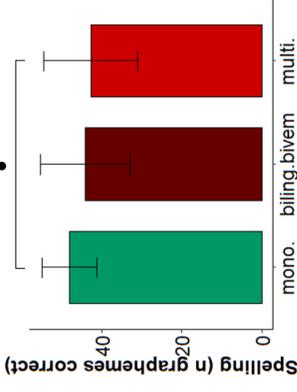
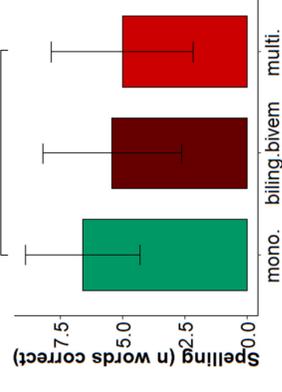
Reading:

- No significant differences between the groups in all subtests of the reading task.



Spelling:

- Significant difference in number of correct words ($p = .03$), only marginally significant difference in number of correct graphemes ($p = .07$): monolinguals are better than the multilingual group of children with various L1s.



Background variables:

- Significant difference in age between the groups: bilingual BIVEM children are significantly younger than monolinguals ($p < .001$) and marginally younger than multilinguals ($p = .06$).
- In regression models including age and gender, neither factor predicted performance in reading nor spelling.

Restrictions of the analysis:

- Sample size and various background factors might influence outcomes.
- At the moment there is no possibility to control how much additional language support in German (if any) children from other investigated groups received during preschool age.
- Overall low results on the reading task might be due to the time limit as well as the multiple choice design. In general, the outcomes in the 1st grade are not definite. In the 2nd and 3rd grades, differences between groups may be more pronounced or may, instead, disappear.