

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the acquisition of complex syntax in typical oral language development and in children with specific language impairment (SLI). The project is based in a cognitive linguistic and usage-based perspective. It can be expected that children with SLI will have difficulties in the acquisition of complex syntactic structures. However, few studies have reported on complex syntax acquisition in children with SLI. There are few observational studies examining children's use of complex sentences in spontaneous speech (Diessel, 2004). Moreover, whereas for children in the school-age years production of complex syntax is an essential skill (Marinellie, 2004), it is still difficult to define 'complex syntax'. If disorders of morphosyntactic complexity encountered by children with SLI parallel their difficulties with basic grammatical markers, then children with SLI could have problems with the development of markers of syntactic complex constructions, or use them in limited usage-based constructions.

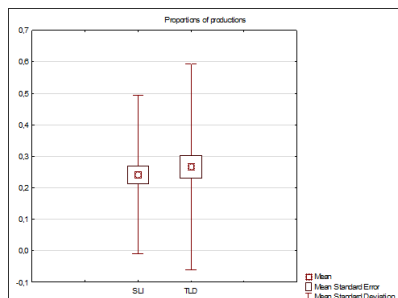
AIMS

1. Children with SLI should produce less complex syntax than their peers with typical language development (TLD) if matched on MLU (Mean Length Utterances).
2. Children with SLI should produce more fixed forms and children with TLD produce more variability in the linguistics forms.

RESULTS

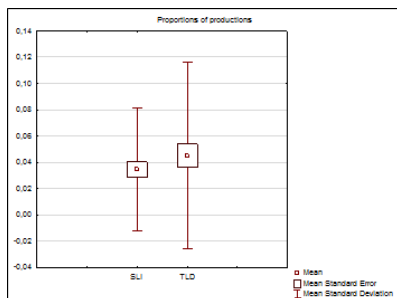
Stage 1

- ◆ No significant difference between the two groups for the productions. Wilcoxon Test : $z = 0,723$; $p = 0,483767$.
- ◆ Variances significantly different: $F(80)=1,63$; $p < .05$



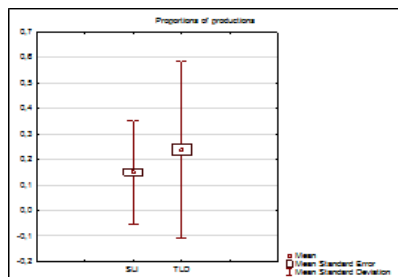
Stages 2 and 3

- ◆ A significant difference between the two groups for the productions. Wilcoxon Test : $z = 6,603$; $p < .001$.
- ◆ Variances significantly different : $F(255)=3,0625$; $p < .05$



Stages 4 and 5

- ◆ A significant difference between the two groups for the productions. Wilcoxon Test : $z = 2,181$; $p < .05$.
- ◆ Variances significantly different : $F(64)=2,45$; $p < .05$



METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

◆ 8 children with SLI

- Aged from 4;10;13 to 10;4;20
- Monolingual French speakers
- QIP (WISC IV) > 85
- Language skills below 1.25 SD from the mean in 2 or more of 5 language areas
- No neurological or auditory disorders

◆ 8 children with TLD

- No history of language disorders
- Monolingual French speakers
- Matched with children with SLI based on MLU

PROCEDURES

- ◆ Spontaneous language samples were collected from the participants in their home.
- ◆ All the children's produced utterances were recorded, transcribed and analyzed.
- ◆ A morphosyntactic analyze using the F-LARSP (French adaptation of LARSP, Maillart, Parisse & Tommerdahl, in press) was conducted on both groups on the different stages.
- ◆ F-LARSP is divided into 5 stages which represent levels of development. We investigated the results on the 5 stages in order to understand the morphosyntactic development of children with SLI. We were especially interested in the last stages' results because they depict the development of complex syntax.

DISCUSSION

- ◆ By analyzing results from stage 1 in children with SLI produce as much syntactic structures as TLD but with less variability.
- ◆ By analyzing results from stages 2 and 3 in children with SLI : less productions and less variability.
- ◆ By analyzing results from stages 4 and 5 in children with SLI : less productions and less variability.

→ Children with SLI produce less morphosyntactic complexity's markers than their peers if matched on MLU.

→ Children with SLI produce more fixed forms and children with TLD produce more variability in the linguistics forms.

References

- Diessel, H. (2004). *The Acquisition of Complex Sentences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Maillart, C., Parisse, C. & Tommerdahl, J. (2012). F-LARSP: An Adaptation of the LARSP Language Profile 1.0 for French.
- Marinellie, S. (2004). Complex syntax used by school-age children with specific language impairment (SLI) in child-adult conversation. *Journal of Communication Disorders* 37: 517-33.