

Abstract

This study explores Thai children's metalinguistic awareness in phonological, lexical, and syntactic-semantic domains across age groups (5-6 and 8-9 years old) and educational programs (regular and international programs). The study also looks at children's strategies in justifying and correcting linguistic errors. Data were collected, using 10 different tests created for examining metalinguistic awareness in the relevant aspects, from 40 Thai children at the ages of 5-6 and 8-9, attending regular and international programs.

Overall, both age groups and educational programs performed best in syntactic and semantic domains but worst in lexical domains. Among the 5-6 year olds, the regular program group outperformed the international program group in phonological and lexical domains while among the 8-9 year olds, the regular program group did better in phonological and syntactic-semantic domains. However, these differences were not statistically significant.

In both programs, the 8-9 year olds performed significantly better than the 5-6 year olds on all tasks except for the test on onset - coda identification and those on word arbitrariness.

When correcting linguistic errors, most children succeeded, and very few failed to correct classifiers that are not frequently used. Likewise, most of them could correct clearly unacceptable meanings and syntactic errors. Only a few did not succeed in correcting complex sentences. Moreover, some justifications and corrections from the children did not identically match the target answers, yet they were suitable with the use of words and structures which are possible and more familiar.

The findings suggest that metalinguistic awareness of children with monolingual children and those with sequential bilingualism do not differ. And importantly, bilingualism (at least in these age groups) does not seem to inhibit the development of their mother language.