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"Oh my gosh!": Evaluation and voicing in narratives from a cross-linguistic perspective

Narrative competence includes the discourse-pragmatic ability to represent events, actors, and motivations from an evaluative-interpretive perspective (Bamberg and Damrad-Frye 1991). Comparing evaluative content in bilingual and monolingual children's narratives, we examine whether bilingualism affects the use and functions of evaluative devices in narrative performance. Data were elicited from ten subjects (six Hungarian-English bilinguals, two monolinguals in each language), ages six to nine, using the picture book *Frog, Where Are You?* (Mayer 1969). The analysis indicates a bilingual advantage with respect to the number and range of evaluative devices, an advantage that increases with age. The variety of evaluative devices also correlates with the use of advanced vocabulary. Only bilinguals use voicing strategies, and mostly so when narrating in Hungarian. Appraisal, however, is more frequent in English. We argue that awareness of an evaluative-interpretive perspective in constructing narratives constitutes an aspect of discourse-pragmatic competence where bilinguals have an advantage over monolinguals. (#150)