

Syntactic Interference in Chinese-English Bilingual Children

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1 Introduction

Interference is different from language borrowing. Language borrowing is systematic and collective; it is related to integration, which means features of one language are adopted as part of the other language. Monolinguals used these foreign features but are not likely to know anything about the language from which some features are borrowed. These loan words may only occur in one dialect of the languages but not other dialects. That is, the loan words appearing in South American English may not be used at all in other places where people speak English. As the examples provided in Mackey 1959, Banat German have diverse determiner uses in different villages. One village may use *die Butter*, *die Auto* while another may use *der Butter*; *der Auto*.

Another term 'interlanguage' is also needed to be clarified. It was employed by Selinker 1972 and he proposed that the attempted production of a Target Language by a second language learner should be considered as a separate linguistic system. Adult language learners typically experience difficulty when learning a second language; the difficulties they encounter are due to the features appearing in L1 but not in L2 or vice versa. Hence, the language they are acquiring is called interlanguage. The interlanguages are natural languages and systematic through their developments. As conceived, interlanguages are products of the interaction between two languages and the features in L1 (the first language) and L2 (the second language) are expected to occur in such interlanguage. The researches have shown that L1 plays the key role in the construction of interlanguage.

Adjemian 1976 singled out three important characteristics of Interlanguage Hypothesis. The first one is 'systematicity', which refers that interlanguages are natural languages and therefore they are not random collections of items. Based on this property, interlanguages have systematic structures and could be linguistically analyzed. The second is 'permeability', which means interlanguages are susceptible to L1 or L2 rules. Native languages are usually stable and unsusceptible to other linguistic systems; however, interlanguages are constantly affected by L1 or L2 features. In other words, the rules and forms may be improperly acquired or generalized while the native languages permeate the developing interlanguage grammar in various levels. This is the major difference between interlanguages and native languages. The third property is 'fossilization', pointed out by Yip 1995, "the persistence of plateaus of non-target-like competence in the interlanguages (Selinker & Lakshamanan 1992)". That is,

once the permeability is lost, the features in interlanguages will become fossilized. Which properties in interlanguages are susceptible to be fossilized are interesting to many second language learning researchers. The question whether second language learners could attain the full L2 competence are not of consensus; nevertheless, it is granted L2 learners may attain native-like competence in certain areas but completeness of acquisition in other areas of grammar remains an impossibility (Yip 1995).

Interference is individual and contingent. (Mackey 1959) As Mackey describes “ In the speech of bilinguals the pattern and amount of interference is not the same at all times and under all circumstances. The interference may vary with the medium, the style, the register, and the context which the bilingual happens to be using.” Medium refers to spoken or written occasions. Style means the different discourses such as descriptive, narrative or conversational. Register is the social role that a speaker plays in any given occasion. In general, the occurrence of interference in bilinguals is usual but the types of interference are associated with contexts. Therefore, the analysis of interference should take contexts into consideration. Interference in each text is usually divided into six levels: cultural, semantic, lexical, grammatical, phonological and phonetic of a language. Grammatical interferences often include the introduction of foreign parts of speech, grammatical categories and function forms into the other language. An item belonging to a mistaken part of speech may be created. Interferences of grammatical categories may include the misuse of gender e.g. a bilingual may carry over the gender use in one language into another) or misuse of concord and government, for instance, a Chinese-English bilingual may say ‘he sing well’ because Chinese does have third person singular agreement. Interferences of function forms could be free or bound. Interferences of free forms indicate misuse of prepositions, conjunctions, determiners and etc. Bound forms include misuse of inflectional or derivational morphemes, zero modification, or reduplication. In this study, we focus on grammatical level, trying to find out the types of interference tokens in the Chinese-and-English bilinguals who acquire English as a second language at school. On the basis of the interference types, we assess and compare the language developments of the bilinguals with those of Chinese and English monolinguals so as to see whether learning a second language in an early stage affect their native language learning.

2 Methodology

2.1 Subjects

There are six subjects required in this study, four Chinese & English bilinguals, one English monolingual and one Chinese monolingual. The four bilinguals are chosen from K5 of *Jump Start English School*, where teachers are Americans and English is the communication and instruction language. The four subjects speak Chinese as their first language. At around age four, they began their English learning at *Jump Start*. Now they are

aged around 7, and they have studied English for more than two and a half years. In other words, the four bilinguals are learning L2 in a quasi-immersion-program environment, where the instruction language is L2 and no classmates are native speakers of L2. (Dobrovolsky 1996) The four subjects are George, Angel, Andy, and Alex. C.. The English monolingual, Olivia, is around the same age and so is Wendy, the Chinese monolingual.

2.2 Procedures

The four bilinguals are instructed to describe 10 similar pictures of a storybook so as to gather enough tokens for our analysis. They describe the 10 pictures in English first and of course the instruction language is English, too. After a 10-15 minutes break, they are asked to describe the pictures in Chinese. Their descriptions are recorded and transcribed. Olivia and Wendy are also asked to describe the same 10 pictures in their native languages. Olivia and Wendy's descriptions are also recorded and transcribed and their transcriptions will serve as a comparison reference, with which we can assess the two language developments of the four bilinguals.

3 Results

As mentioned above, the four Chinese subjects begin their English learning at around age of four in the kindergarten. English is the instruction language rather than a subject in the school and no one in the class is a native speaker of the medium of instruction. The background looks like the French immersion program. After two and a half years of learning in such environment, we want to see how the performances of the four subjects are if compared with the English and Chinese monolingual peer groups. In these four subjects, some syntactic interference tokens are found. These interference tokens could be English or Chinese.

3.1 Noun phrases:

In English, indefinite countable nouns should carry the plural marker 's/es' or be preceded by the article 'a/an' to express the indefiniteness. Chinese is a non-inflected language; therefore it doesn't have plural inflection on the nouns to express the similar ideas. From this perspective, these Chinese subjects may be interfered in their noun phrase performance, that is, they may have the use of indefinite nouns with zero marking as it is in Chinese. If we compare their performance with the English monolingual at the similar age, they do demonstrate a non-native performance of English noun phrases. The bilinguals appear to lose the markings of countable nouns while zero-marking doesn't occur in Olivia's speech. See examples below.

1 To have some egg and some snail and some spider webs. (George)

2 I see some grass, some flower, and some trees. (Angel)

3 E: What's on the car?

A: Dog. (Andy)

4 A: What are they buying?

B: Buying foods and vegetables and egg and banana and tomatoes. (Alex. C.)

5 There are a herd of cows, chickens, and a rabbit is watching. (Olivia)

In Chinese, nouns can be preceded by numeral plus classifier to indicate indefiniteness, for instance, ‘三隻狗’ or by demonstrative plus classifier to refer to a definite noun phrase, such as ‘這棵樹’, ‘那隻貓’. In other words, classifier possesses an important class in the use of Chinese noun phrases. English doesn’t have the category of classifiers, which initiate our curiosity whether the four subjects would have different performance in the classifiers, that is, their use may be simplified due to the interference of English noun phrases. From our transcription, we found the subjects do have the awareness of the use of classifier; however, the classifiers they use are much fewer than their Chinese bilingual peer group. Four of them commonly adopt the classifier ‘個’ to refer to any nouns. Although most of them can use ‘隻’ to indicate animals, they would unconsciously utilize ‘個’ to replace ‘隻’ when preceded by animals. Moreover, when answering the question ‘how many’ in Chinese, we usually respond with numeral plus classifier (and the target noun can be deleted) especially when the numeral is monosyllabic. For instance, “A:有幾隻啊? B:七隻(狗)”. But in Andy’s case, his response to such question is “A:有幾隻啊? B:七”, a non-native use of Chinese classifiers. This may be influenced by English since English has no classifiers. Besides, Andy rarely uses classifiers when talking about nouns. The total tokens of the classifiers he used are only five while the other three used 15 ~30 tokens of classifiers in the transcription. Instead, the Chinese monolingual at the similar age has good control of classifiers in the appropriate occasions and she also has the highest use of classifiers, 37 tokens. Even if we try to interfere her use by asking “這邊有幾個小鳥?”, she correctly answers “三隻小鳥”. The classifiers she used include ‘棵’(referring to trees), ‘頭’(referring to big mammals), ‘隻’(referring to any animals) and ‘個’(widely referring to any numeral nouns). She doesn’t have any misuse, which implies the four subjects indeed exhibit a delay in this use. This may be due to the interference of English.

6 一個鳥站在...

然後一個蜘蛛在爬來爬去... (George)

7 有一個有一個報紙蓋住他臉. (Angel)

8 A: 有幾隻小鳥?

B: 七。 (Andy)

9 然後一個女生在拿一個花。

然後這兩個狗在玩。(Alex. C.)

10 還有四隻小雞,一隻大公雞,一頭牛,兩隻羊,一隻狗,兩隻蜜蜂在追來追去.

(Wendy)

3.2 Subject-verb agreement

English has subject-verb agreement in the grammar while Chinese doesn’t. The

occurrence of this feature in one language and loss in the other language may result in the children's preference for the simpler ones, that is, the loss of the feature. Therefore, Chinese children may not pay much attention to subject-verb agreement when producing a complete sentence. Although subject-verb agreement is a developmental process in the first language acquisition, children at six to seven should have overcome such misuse. In terms of this perspective, we may prefer to believe the subjects are interfered by their native language so that they demonstrate a delay in the use of subject-verb agreement. From the transcription of Olivia, the native English speaker, she doesn't have any misuse of subject-verb agreement, which shows such developmental process has passed. See some examples.

11 And mother and father is seeing the birds.

He take one dog. (George)

12 The girl and boy is on the bicycle. (Angel)

13 The boy take the dog. (Alex. C.)

14 The children are playing in the stream.

The sister is stepping on the rock and brother is taking a stone. (Olivia)

3.3 Lexicon

English belongs to Endo-European language family while Chinese is a member of Sino-Tibetan family. The two languages exist the fundamental differences. For children who acquire a second language, they may tend to apply the simpler use of one language to the other language in the lexicon.

3.3.1 The misuse of the word 'people'

In English, the word 'people' is a plural noun and should not be preceded by any singular markers such as 'a', 'this/that' or 'one'. However, one of the subjects, George, seems to generalize the word 'people' as the Chinese word '人' because the word '人' are allowed to carry '一個' before it. In other words, he doesn't notice the characteristics of the word 'people' itself. He appears to generalize '一個人' as 'one people' in his use of 'people' and therefore the four interference tokens we found are the use of 'one people'. Since the word 'people' can be singular or plural in George's conceptualization, he tends to take singular verb in the sentence production when the word 'people' is preceded by 'one' as example 16~18 shows.

15 One dog is seeing one people doing things.

16 He take one dog and have one people has - -

17 I see one people is painting the gate.

18 And one people is... taking something let bird eat.

3.3.2 Misuse of the word 'have' as the existential 'there is'

Chinese doesn't distinguish the possessive 'have' from existential 'there is', i.e., the word '有' can have the possessive use as '她有三個妹妹' or the existential use '公園裡有三個人'. However, the corresponding English translation should be 'She has three sisters' and

'There are three people in the park', respectively. In George's case, he appears not to distinguish 'have' from 'there is' and tends to use 'have' in all existential and possessive sentences. Such use is apparently influenced by Chinese. This misuse may result from the tendency that children prefer to adopt the simpler use in language production if he is not corrected.

19 And have one girl is using...taking a flower.

20 He take one dog and have one people has- -

21 And have one bird in the tree.

3.3.3 Misuse of the word 'here'

Chinese locations are often preceded by the locative case marker '在' to indicate the following noun is a location. English has the similar use, such as, 'in', 'on' or 'at'. However, some English words should not follow any prepositions although these words serve as a location, for instance, the word 'here'. The sentence '他在這裡' should be translated into 'he is/was here'. That is, there's no one-to-one correspondence between '在' and 'in/ on/ at'. See examples below.

22 The sheep is in here. (George)

23 Seeing the mother. And some bees in here. (George)

24 The chicken is running to here. (Alex.C.)

3.3.4 Misuse of the word 'see'

The word 'see' refers to 'noticing something with eyes' and is not allowed to take progressive aspect since the movement can't be lasting. The other two words related to 'see' are 'look at' and 'watch', both of which indicate staring at something for a short time and therefore they can carry progressive aspect. In other words, not all verbs take progressive form, and the distinction should be made between "process verbs", which involve changing toward an end, and "state verbs", which refers to an unchanging condition. Only "process verbs" can carry progressive aspect and children rarely apply it incorrectly. State verbs like 'know', 'see', 'like', 'want' and 'need' can't take progressive form. (Lund 1993) In Chinese, we only have one word '看' to indicate 'see', 'look at' and 'watch'. In the sentence '他在看小鳥' should have the translation 'He is looking at the bird' or 'He is watching the bird'. However, we found the four subjects tend to produce the sentence like 'He is seeing the bird', an incorrect use of 'see'. This doesn't mean that these subjects can't distinguish 'process verbs' and 'state verbs' because rare native children make such mistake in their acquisition. Therefore, it can be perceived that four of them all generalize the use of '看' into English 'see'; hence, 'see' can have present/past tense and progressive aspect as '看' does, that is, '在看' (corresponds to 'be seeing') and '看到'(corresponds to 'see' or 'saw'). Such occurrences of progressive aspect are of high frequency. We will have more discussion on this part later.

24 And one dog is seeing the ball and just hit the father's cut- -painting cutter.
(George)

25 E: And what's this cat doing?

26 A: Seeing. (Angel)

27 E: What's the boy doing?

28 A: Seeing the bottle. (Andy)

29 The cat and the people is seeing inside. (Alex. C.)

30 Sister is looking at birds. The dog is looking at paint. Brother is looking at ball and paint. (Olivia)

3.3.5 Misuse of some verbs

It is a common strategy for second language learners to apply L2 vocabulary into L1 syntactic expression if they encounter some expression problems in L2. Such strategy indeed helps L2 learners express ideas at that time; however, such use often results in non-native use in the L2 expression. From our transcription, we do find interference examples like this. In these four subjects' examples, we can find the influence of L1 syntactic expression in L2 sentences.

31 The boy and the girl is playing the bicycle. (George)...玩腳踏車 (is playing with the bicycle)

32 The boy is in bicycle's back. (George)...坐在腳踏車後面 (is sitting at the back of the bicycle)

33 This boy's taking one branch and is doing the father. (George)...作弄爸爸 (is playing tricks on the father)

34 Because the people want buy things, go home and come to eat. (George)...來吃 (eat)

35 Pouring the seeds and might let the grass grow many. (Angel)...長的很多...(grow much)

36 It's in their house outside. (Angel)...在房子外面 (outside the house)

37 E: Is it in the morning or in the afternoon?

A: Afternoon.

E: Why?

A: look like (Andy)...很像 (It looks like.)

3.4 Misuse of word order

Chinese word order is quite different from that in English. For instance, Chinese locative noun phrase begins with location while English locative noun phrase ends with location. Consider the example: '(在)公園的花很漂亮' vs. 'The flowers in the park are beautiful'. Besides, the wh-words in the English interrogative sentences exhibits wh-movement while those words stay in the same position in Chinese interrogation as the example 'Where is he?' vs. '他在哪裡?' Such obvious word order differences may bring about interference in the language learner to some extent. That is, they would tend to lose the sensitivity to the grammaticality judgment in the specific language. Such interference tokens

are found in our transcription.

38 然後這女生在玩她買的汽球,在旁邊. → 在旁邊買的汽球

39 Season is what? → What is season?

40 This is called what? → What is this called?

4 Discussions

In section 3, we have seen a lot of interference types with examples. In this section, we try to present the percentage of each inference type in each speaker. Besides, the performance of the monolingual will be included, serving as a comparison reference so as to make sure the developmental stage of the four subjects. Not only the interference tokens but also other special use of tokens of the bilinguals will be included to compare with monolinguals.

4.1 The performance of noun phrase

As shown in 3.1, the misuse of English countable nouns and Chinese classifiers are the most common interference types. See table 1 and table 2 for the performance of each speaker along with the monolinguals.

Table 1

Misuse of markings in English countable nouns			
Name	Tokens	Total	%
George	12	34	35.29
Angel	18	38	42.10
Andy	32	35	91.42
Alex. C.	17	45	37.78
Olivia	0	30	0

Table 2

Misuse of Chinese classifier			
Name	Tokens	Total	%
George	11	29	37.93
Angel	9	15	60
Andy	2	5	40
Alex. C.	10	28	35.71
Wendy	0	37	0

From the tables above, we see that at the age of 7, the monolinguals do not encounter the misuse of noun phrase at all. Olivia, the English monolingual, produces 30 tokens of countable nouns and none of them has inappropriate marking. The same case occurs in Wendy, the Chinese monolingual. Olivia and Wendy's correct use shows the four subjects stay in the delayed condition. On the one hand, in the case of the Chinese classifier interference, the generalized use of '個' in the four subjects is an obligatory developmental process in the acquisition of classifiers. This may initiate one's doubts whether the four subjects are in the developmental stage or are interfered by English. Wendy's performance convince us that the native Chinese speakers should exhibit wider use of classifiers, for instance, '棵', '頭', etc. instead of the only use '個'. That is, the bilinguals are delayed to some extent in this use. On the other hand, Olivia's perfect performance in the markings of nouns also persuades us to believe the four subjects are interfered by Chinese zero-marking system to some extent. And among them, Andy shows the highest frequency of the misuse, which implies his awareness

of English marking system is not completely constructed. Andy's rare use of Chinese classifiers, that is, only five tokens, apparently implies his high delay in Chinese if he is compared with his peer groups or Chinese monolingual at the similar age.

The interference we found in the four subjects can be explained by the using time. For the four subjects, they apparently spent half of their time in either of the languages. For the monolinguals, they spent their whole time in one language and hence demonstrated better performances. Therefore, it is perceivable that the four subjects exhibit a delay in either of their language learning. However, Andy's case may initiate one's concern that whether the interference would result in the very high frequency of misuse in either of the language as it shows in Andy's production.

4.2 The performance of subject-verb agreement

Agreement between subject and verb should be made according to the singular or plural subjects in English. In Chinese, verbs are not inflected and hence the verbs alone can't imply whether the subject is singular or plural. Further, it is known that subject-verb agreement is a developmental process in the first language acquisition. From the two points of views above, the misuse of subject-verb agreement in the four subjects may be due to either of the reasons. However, the performance of English monolingual Olivia convinces us that the misuse results from interference rather than developmental stages. See table 3 for illustration.

Table 3

Misuse of English subject-verb agreement			
Name	Tokens	Total	%
George	19	61	31.14
Angel	4	25	16
Andy	#	Null ¹	#
Alex. C.	8	32	25
Olivia	0	40	0

1: In Andy's speech, only one sentence appears with subject.

Olivia's good control of subject-verb agreement shows she has passed the stage of misuse of agreement. Compared with Olivia, three of the four subjects shows the misuse to some extent; however, percentage of the misuse are not of high frequency, i.e. ranging from 15% ~30%, which shows the three subjects are aware of the use of agreement but do not have as good control as Olivia does. We exclude Andy's case since he seldom produces sentences with subjects.

4.3 The corresponding use of progressive aspect in English and Chinese

'在' represents the progressive aspect marker in Chinese. In English, the verbs are inflected with suffix 'ing' and are preceded by the aux 'be' so as to convey the progressive aspect. At first, we doubt the high-frequency occurrence of '在' in Chinese transcription are

associated with the high frequency use of English progressive aspect.

However, from the performance percentage of Chinese and English monolinguals respectively such correspondence is a coincidence as table 4 demonstrates.

Table 4

The corresponding use of progressive aspect in Chinese and English						
Name	English			Chinese		
	Tokens	Total	%	Tokens	Total	%
George	42	50	84	43	50	86
Angel	37	43	86.04	41	49	83.67
Andy	20	35	57	6	24	25
Alex. C.	32	42	76.19	26	33	78.78
Olivia	36	39	92.30	#	#	#
Wendy	#	#	#	37	43	86.04

From table 4, we can see Olivia and Wendy exhibit high frequency use of progressive aspect, which indicates that both of them tend to conceptualize the events in the ten pictures as continuous movements. And therefore they both show the high frequency use of progressive aspect. The three subjects, George, Angel, and Alex. C. also show the same tendency, that is, the high-frequency use of progressive aspect in Chinese and English. In other words, the correspondence high-frequency use is not due to the language interference but a coincidence. Andy exhibits relative-low use of progressive aspect in Chinese and English. This may be the reason that Andy doesn't consider the events in the pictures continuous; instead, he regards the events as steady. Hence, he doesn't use the progressive aspect so often as his peer groups do. He seems to show a delay in the progressive use.

4.4 The misuse of 'see', 'look at' and 'watch'

As shown in 3.3, the four subjects show an interference tendency for the generalized use of 'see'. Table 5 shows the misuse is of high frequency and only Andy shows a better understanding of the use of 'see'. From table 6, we can infer that such generalized use of 'see' with progressive aspect corresponds to '在看' because the similar tokens are found. This finding proves to be the evidence of the interference, that is, 'see' is influenced by the use of '看'.

Table 5

The use of 'see', 'look at', 'watch' with progressive aspect (Unit: tokens)					
Name	'see'	'watch'	'look at'	total	% of incorrect use
George	10	0	0	10	100
Angel	9	2	0	11	81.81
Andy	1	0	3	4	25

Alex. C.	5	0	0	5	100
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Table 6

The corresponding use of 'see' and '看到' & '在看'				
(Unit: tokens)				
Name	'see' or 'saw'	'seeing'	'看到'	'在看'
George	1	10	3	13
Angel	1	9	0	9
Andy	2	1	#	#
Alex.C.	2	5	2	5

4.5 Misuse of English tense or tense shift

In our transcriptions, progressive form occurs the most often since all subjects conceptualize the events as moving. However, subjects may shift into past simple tense for one or two tokens in the progressive narration, which arouse our concern whether the subjects know they are shifting verb tense. Interestingly, English monolingual shifts tense in the description (ex.42). Sometimes the subject does not use past tense at the appropriate occasion (ex.43). As we see from table7 below, such tokens don't occur often. Examples are like the following.

40 E: He's holding an egg..unh..playing with an egg. And what is the girl doing?

A: Saw the present. (Andy)

41 The dog is pulling the egg. They found the egg. The two birds is finding the web and spider. (Alex. C.)

42 Grandma is giving...feeding the birds. The sister has a balloon. They played in the park. (Olivia)

43 Yes, I already say. (Angel)

Table 7

Misuse of English tense or tense shift	
Name	Tokens
George	Null
Angel	3
Andy	1
Alex. C.	3
Olivia	2

4.6 Misuse of double verbs in English

English simple sentence doesn't allow the use of double verbs. But Chinese does, for

example, ‘我喜歡看書’. This difference may initiate our doubt whether the subjects do acquire the ‘no double verbs rule’ in English. In our transcription, only George shows relative-higher frequency of such misuse as examples 44 and 45. Nevertheless, the misuse like ex.44 may result from slips of tongue, i.e., George is trying to say ‘is standing’ but he is speaking too fast to pronounce the word clearly. Olivia has one token like ex.44. The other misuse of Olivia may come from false repair (ex.47). The target verb has some distance from the subject and therefore she produces such near-double-verb sentence. Table 8 is the total tokens of misuse.

44 The girl is stand the stone and the water come out. (George)

45 Because the people want buy things, go home
and come to eat. (George)

46 Brother is accidentally put a ball on the paint. (Olivia)

47 The flower is...have sweet smells. (Olivia)

Table 8

Misuse of double verbs in an English sentence	
Name	Tokens
George	7
Angel	Null
Andy	Null
Alex. C.	1
Olivia	2

4.7 The high frequency use of filler ‘那個’ in Chinese transcription

Interestingly, three of the four subjects use the filler ‘那個’ quite often. As we know, filler is a strategy to lengthen our thinking time when we are searching for the next word to speak. The filler functions as pause, which gives people a momentary break to consider the upcoming word. However, different from pause, the use of filler gives the listeners cues that the speaker encounters some expression problems and is thinking about the next words. If the listeners receive such message, they would give positive response at once and help the speaker continue his/her expression. In our transcription, bilingual children adopt this strategy very often, which suggests that they do encounter some expression problems sometimes. Instead, Wendy, the Chinese monolingual, never uses filler in her description, which means she has the most fluent expression. In other words, although all of them are at the same age, bilinguals do show somewhat delay in their speech. Andy doesn’t use filler, either. This is because he also seldom uses ‘那個’, the classifiers in his description. See examples and table 9 for comparison.

48 他們是在清東西.清他們那個..那個 mm... (George)

49 那個人在跟那個..那個什麼在跟一個人買東西. (Angel)

50 有一個男生在弄那個...畫畫. (Alex. C.)

Table 9

The use of filler '那個'			
Name	Tokens	Total	%
George	8	12	66.67
Angel	9	30	30
Andy	0	1	#
Alex. C.	8	23	34.78
Wendy	#	0	0

5 Conclusion

As we have mentioned in section 2, the four bilingual children are staying in a quasi-French-immersion environment, that is, they are majority language students (Chinese) in a minority language class (English). They are instructed in English at school and none of the students are native speakers of English. Under such learning background for more than two and a half years, we can see that the two languages they use are interfered by the two languages to some extent in the developing stage (at the age 7) as shown in section 3 and 4. If we compare the performances of the four bilingual children with those of the two monolinguals in each language in terms of the interference types, we see the bilinguals do show a delay in both languages because many misuses of the bilinguals do not occur in the monolingual's speech at all. This may be due to the reason that they spent half of their time on each language while monolinguals spent all their time on one language; therefore, monolinguals do show some productive advantage (e.g. speaking) in the early years. But as time went by, the bilinguals may gradually catch up with their monolinguals and even outperform their monolingual peer groups as the French immersion program ends up: the bilinguals has as good L1 as monolinguals by grade six but produces a mixed L2. In our study, we can see the four bilinguals do show interference tendency in their speech in the developing stage (at the age 7) and the interference types are shown in detail. Whether the languages of the four bilinguals will end up as the immersion program shows may require a further investigation.

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