

Abstract

We examined the role of vocabulary knowledge, orthographic awareness, and phonological awareness in predicting the morphological awareness of children in Grade 1 and 2 by constructing a bilingual model between Chinese and English. Moreover, we compared the saliency of predictors of morphological awareness by comparing the effects both within the same language and across languages. Two hundred and eighty-nine Grade 1 and 2 bilingual children ($M_{age} = 7.04$) recruited from Hong Kong were assessed using the measures of morphological awareness, vocabulary knowledge, orthographic awareness in both Chinese and English, and Chinese phonological awareness. Non-verbal IQ was also tested as a control variable along with age. Results of path analysis showed that within the same language, vocabulary knowledge, orthographic awareness, and phonological awareness all predicted morphological awareness. In addition, Chinese vocabulary knowledge positively predicted English morphological awareness, and Chinese orthographic awareness predicted English morphological awareness. Moreover, the strength of predictability from Chinese orthographic awareness to Chinese morphological awareness was weaker than that of English. These findings suggest that other metalinguistic awareness contributes to the development of morphological awareness in bilingual children, providing practical implications for designing educational programmes and interventions.

Keywords: Chinese and English, morphological awareness, vocabulary knowledge, orthographic awareness, phonological awareness, bilingualism