Individual differences in L2 language and literacy outcomes in English-speaking students in French-L2 immersion programs

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A comprehensive battery of tests of oral language and reading achievement in English and in French were administered to Kindergarten and Grade 1 students (monolingual English or English-dominant bilinguals in an Early French Immersion program in the Montreal region) in order to determine individual differences in 1) L2 oral language and reading achievement in French immersion students; 2) predictors of oral language and literacy development in French-L2; and, 3) to what extent and how risk for reading and language acquisition difficulties/impairment in a second language overlap.

Facts
- Small units of phonological awareness in English (blending) and knowledge of the sounds of the English alphabet were the best predictors of French word decoding outcomes.
- English sentence repetition was the best predictor of French oral language ability.
- Knowledge of French at Kindergarten entry was an additional unique predictor of reading outcomes.
- Oral and written language difficulty appear to be distinct risk profiles.
- Risk of difficulty in L2 reading development and L2 oral language can be identified in French Immersion students using L1 predictor measures as early as the beginning of Kindergarten.
- If there are signs of students struggling in learning to read in French, it is important that these students get the help they need, DO NOT WAIT – early intervention is crucial.