

BECOMING BIASED : EARLY ACQUISITION OF THE CONSONANT BIAS IN LEXICAL PROCESSING IN FRENCH

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Following the proposal of a functional dissociation in language processing, according to which consonants would be given more weight than vowels in lexical processing, and vowels would be given more weight than consonants in prosodic/syntactic processing (Nespor et al., 2003), we investigated the proposed consonant bias at the lexical level both from a crosslinguistic and developmental perspective. Crosslinguistically, while the C-bias was found to be pervasive in French, different patterns were found in other languages, with a later emergence of the C-bias in English and the observation of a V-bias in Danish toddlers. This variation suggests that the originally proposed C-bias is language-modulated. Developmentally, three lexically-related studies focusing on French-learning infants between 5 and 11 months suggest that these infants switch from an early V-bias around 5/6 months of age to a functional C-bias around 8/11 months. We will discuss several hypotheses that might explain these developmental changes.