

## **Narrative competence of bilingual children: an exploratory study of Franco-Chinese children aged 5 to 10 years old in France**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to analyze and to describe the narrative competence of bilingual children, who speak both Chinese and French and are living in France. This study is focused on two aspects: the differences in narrative competence of the two languages of bilingual children aged 5 to 10 years old and the development of the narrative competence of this group. In the research, the narrative competence of children in both languages will be measured by using an object-oriented story.

**Keywords:** bilingualism, bilingual children, narrative competence

### **Resumen**

El objetivo de este artículo es analizar y describir la competencia narrativa de los niños bilingües, que hablan chino y francés y viven en Francia. Este estudio se centra en dos aspectos: las diferencias en la competencia narrativa de los dos idiomas de niños bilingües de 5 a 10 años de edad y el desarrollo de la competencia narrativa de este grupo. La competencia narrativa de los niños en ambos idiomas se mide utilizando una historia orientada a objetos.

**Palabras clave:** bilingüismo, niños bilingües, competencia narrativa

### **1. Introduction**

Bilinguals, due to their special condition and their social and cultural background, remain always a subject of interest for researches. The present study is focused on the narrative competence of bilingual children in the two languages they use, Chinese and French. In the following chapter, we will be presenting a brief introduction about the languages involved in this research, as well as our study on narrative competence. Il faut aussi noter que la thématique des compétences

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linguistiques et bilinguisme constitue un domaine largement étudié. Pour réaliser notre étude, nous nous sommes inspirés de nombreuses références parmi lesquelles nous nous limitons à citer (Akcu-Koç A., Neilson K. & Johnson C., 2001) (Akinci M. A., 2002) (Bredart S. & Rondal J. A., 1982) (Deshays E., 1990) (Deuchar, M. & Quay S., 2000) (Esch, E. & Piley, P., 2003) (Grosjean, F., 2012) (Salminen, A. N., 2011) (Titone, R., 1972). Pour des raisons de limites liées à la publication, nous n'exposons pas ici de synthèse de ces références.

## 1.1 Chinese and French

As we know, there are more than 50% of the children living in the bilingual or multilingual world, bilingual children made a very important group in the society and school, they are no longer an exception. As they can be defined as a special group facing a more complex reality, bilingual children are always regarded as an interesting subject. As most of the researches were focusing on Indo-European languages, we can barely find researches concerning Sino-Tibetan languages. In this research, we intend to introduce one of the Sino-Tibetan languages in the particular domain. This is a cross-linguistic study of French (Indo-European language) and Chinese (Sino-Tibetan language).

As the two languages involved in the study do not belong to the same language family, they can hardly exist in the same category of writing systems. Chinese is a typical example of logographic language, Chinese characters are morpho-syllabic, while French is widely known as an alphabetic language.

Although the two languages involved in the study do not belong to the same language family and writing system, however they are in the same typological class, they are all SVO (subject-verb-objet) language. All these similarities and differences made our research more interesting and brought richer information for the study.

## 1.2 Narrative competence

*«A narrative is one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually occurs. »* (Labov and Waletzky, 1967, p. 20)

A narrative can be considered as a method of collecting and assembling one's past experiences and knowledge by combining linguistic elements to build a whole

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sequence of events which are the facts that already exist in reality in diverse forms. They can be literary works as stories or poems; they can also be events that actually occurred in reality. Thus, generally speaking, the ability to tell a story can be regarded as a competence.

The goal of the present study is to highlight the development of bilingual children's narrative competence of their two languages. In the following analysis, we are going to show a parallel result of narratives of two languages of a same story told by bilingual children of different ages, in order to show the differences of narrative competences of children caused by age difference, and the development tendency of the narrative competence of bilingual children in primary school.

Researches of children's bilingualism are already very numerous, while most of the researches are about Indo-European languages, and the studies about Asian languages are extremely rare. We intend, in paper, to convey some different visions in this specific field, making Asian languages more involved in the research of multilingualism.

Generally speaking, different language family means different area, different culture and different group of people. The group we are going to study, is the certain group in the middle of two totally different language families and two cultures which are supposed to exist in two far away continents. So, the bilingual participants are not only bearers of two languages, they are also the carriers of two different cultures. Whether these two cultures can be combined in their knowledge system harmoniously is always a question in the academic field of the multilingual studying. We think the situation of the combination of two cultures of the bilingual people can be measured by their competence of their languages. The condition of the balance can also be considered as a reflection of the balance condition of the two cultures in the knowledge system of bilingual people. Concerning the narrative, as we have already mentioned, is a method which consists of collecting and assembling one's past experiences and knowledge by building a sequential story; so the narrative competence demands one's past experiences and knowledge to form the narrative production, thus we can say the narrative competence is also a reflection of one person's information and knowledge stock, which is his/her stock of a certain culture. Therefore, the narrative competence

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can be regarded as a method to reflect the balance condition of two cultures in bilingual people's knowledge and cognitive system.

In the following, we will firstly go to the discussion of the theory which is also the criterion we can use to evaluate the narrative competence of our participants and the methodology of the research. We are also going to give a brief review of every section concerning the research process, including both languages involved in the study, the participants we have chosen and the book we used as a material to test the narrative competence of children, etc. Thereafter, we will analyze the results we are collected in the research with the criterion. We are going to analyze those results in a comparative perspective in order to give a clear view of the narrative competence of the two languages of our participants of different ages. We will compare the narratives first based on a horizontal comparison (the comparison of narratives of two languages) and then we are also going to give a vertical comparison of different ages of children to show the development trend of their narrative competence.

## **2. Research methodology**

This part aims to address the methodology concerning research. In the following chapter, we will present the objective of the research, as well as the process.

### **2.1 Research objective**

This study can be seen as an early stage of the research of the production of connected discourse, because according to Berman and Slobin (1994), the uses of language in discourse shape both grammar and the course of its development. There are many discourse genres in the field, while in this study, since the object of our study is bilingual children, and the narrative competence develops relatively early in children, we have chosen the narrative genre.

The objective of the present study is to compare the narrative competence in two languages of bilingual children and to outline the development of the narrative competence in both languages. The narrative competence (Bamberg, M.G.W., 1987) can be regarded as a reflection of the actual abilities of the two languages of bilingual children (Bredart, S. & Rondal J. A., 1982), (Deshays, E. 1990), it can also be used to draw conclusions about the relations between the two languages of a bilingual child – whether the two languages are in a balanced condition, and if not, the child is more

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attached to which language. (Deuchar, M. & Quay S., 2000), (Esch, E. & Piley, P., 2003), (Grosjean, F., 2012)

## **2.2 Methodologies**

The study is based on the method of comparative analysis. As the objective of the study involves two basic problems, the results of the study are also compared in two perspectives, thus the data will be analyzed from a horizontal view (the comparison of two versions of the narratives of two languages) and a vertical view (the comparison of the results of children in different ages).

### **2.2.1 Criteria of narrative competence of bilingual children**

To evaluate the narrative competence of children, we have to find an anchor point as a criterion. A narrator should collect necessary elements appearing in the story in order to complete story fragments, therefore to build a complete, whole thematic sequence of all the events which occurred. Thus, in research studies, the narrators are always asked to organize a correct, ideal story structure. The more advance one's narrative competence is, the more likely one can steadily increase more completed episodes in one's narrative production. According to the former studies of Bamberg (1987), children who are under five years old can hardly build complex episodes in their narrative productions, and normally the development of story structure can be completed by the age of ten. From this point, we can see that the story structure develops when age is increasing. With the increasing of age, the narrator tends to build more organized and complete story structure of the narrative production, that is to say, the narrative competence tends to augment with the increasing of age. The story structure can be considered as a criterion of one's narrative production, thus a way to evaluate narrative competence.

Berman and Slobin (1994) first proposed the idea of global structure in their research. The global structure is the macrostructure of the story, it can be regarded as an overall plotline which chains all the events in a thematic way. The narrator with advanced narrative competence should be able to organize the events around an overall plotline and produce a thematically coherent global structure. Since we have already clarified that the global structure can be considered as a criterion of the narrative competence, we need to make this criterion more precise and clearer to function as a

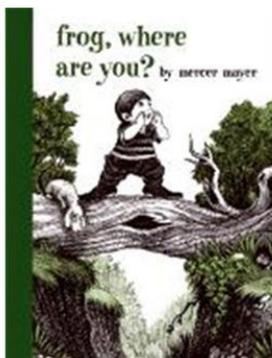
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workable measure. We can extract three main elements of the story which builds the global structure as three sub-criteria. These three core components are responsible for relating the contents of the story as an integrated whole. These sub-criteria are: (1) the onset of the plot: the reason of all the actions and following events, the symbolic beginning of the whole story; (2) the unfolding of the plot: the process of the story, all the events should be located along the main plotline; (3) the resolution of the plot: the resolution of the original question. (Berman and Slobin, 1994)

These three components of “global structure” are extracted from the pioneering work of Labov and Waletzky (1967) and correspond to the “story grammar” approach of narrative construction proposed by Mander (1982) and Shen (1988).<sup>3</sup> The original version of the three core components is: (1) initiating goal: the original problem that motivated the action; (2) elaboration or complication: the development of the protagonist actions aiming to solve the problem; (3) the outcome of attempts: the resolution of the problem.

## 2.2.2 The material

The material we used for this study is the famous picture book *Frog, where are you?* by Mercer Mayer. This book was first published by The Dial Press, in New York, and it works as a research tool in the whole world. Until nowadays, we know that



at least 150 research actions in 50 languages were based on this book. The researches touch mainly the field of languages studying, yet the subjects vary; there are not only the studies on the development of spoken languages, but also on the development of sign language, the language-impairments and various bilingual combinations.

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of languages studying, yet the subjects vary; there are not only the studies on the development of spoken languages, but also on the development of sign language, the language-impairments and various bilingual combinations.

The numerous researches and the collected data allowed drawing general conclusions based on the specificities of different languages. Adopting this book as a research material allows us to study the content across diverse languages and different ages of narrators.

The book contains 28 pictures, which are chained in a certain sequential order. They organized a story which is typically fit in the global structure. The pictures represent a simple story,

The beginning of the story is also the onset of the plot, where the boy and the dog (the protagonists) realize frog has disappeared; the following parts are the process of quest, the boy and a dog try to find the frog, these parts are the elaboration of the actions of the protagonist, the unfolding of the plot; the final part is the resolution of the initial problem, which is the boy's finding the frog he has lost. It is quite clear that the story is fashioned in a certain sequential order, in which the protagonists are at the beginning confronted with a problem, and then the plan launched and the sequential activities are carried out in order to solve the problem; and at the end of the story, the protagonists have found a solution effectively. To introduce the story, we will describe it in a brief way in the following paragraph:

*“This is a story about a little boy who had a pet dog and a frog. One evening, the boy, dog, and frog were in the boy's bed room. The boy and the dog went to sleep and while they were sleeping, the frog escaped from its jar. The next morning the boy and the dog woke up and found the empty jar. The boy was upset, and tried to find the frog. But in each place he searched, he found nothing or encountered a different animal. Finally, a deer accidentally carried the boy to a pond where he found the frog with a family of frogs. The story ended with the boy taking home a baby frog.”* (Berman and Slobin, 1994, p.85)

From the brief narration of this book, it is clear that the book is ideal as a material for the task of narrative production. It is simple and clear, easy to understand and tell for young children. The images contain a lot of information, including the change of

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weather (night and morning), the change of places (the house, outside the house, the forest, etc.), the protagonists (the boy and the dog), the problem (loss of a frog), and the solution of the problem (finds the frog), etc.

The boy is the main protagonist, and the dog presents itself as the second. Both protagonists are motivated and indicated by the same goal (find the frog) but they are involved in different activities. These are the two sets of sequential activities that have occurred in parallel. The narrator is asked to tell the two sets of activities by connecting them temporally. He or she should narrate the different activities of the two protagonists at the same time, in order to present the flow of activities in their temporal sequences.

The story can also present an alternation of roles. Although the boy and the dog are the main protagonists whose goal-oriented activities should be regarded as the main story line, they can also be regarded as subjects ("grammatical patient") who undergo the activities of others protagonists. As we have shown in the previous text, we can see that the other actors (the mole, the owl, the bees, the deer, etc.) block or accelerate the thematic progression of the story (find the frog). So we can say that there are two tasks for the narrators of this story: chain the simultaneous activities of main protagonists and highlight the other roles of the protagonists in the progression of thematic progression of the story. The narrators should pay attention to both tasks in order to produce the narration based on this book.

As good as a narrative material this book is, there are still some disadvantages that should be mentioned.

First of all, as a picture book, it's actually a bit long for children. As we know, children tend not to concentrate for long time. During the research, we found that children from 3 to 4 years old take about 9 minutes or even longer to tell the story. They sometimes become impatient or easily distracted during the task process.

Moreover, 28 pictures are a little more for young children; it is difficult for them to link one picture to another in order to make a whole story. They can only describe the series of images that follow each other. For example, younger children have no trouble understanding that the frog was out of the jar on one page, and that was empty on the next. But it's harder for them to understand in the page where the boy climbs on

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the rock and grabs what appear to be the branches of a tree, but are actually the antlers of a deer which stood behind the rock on the next page.

Second, the structure of this story is relatively complex for children. Stories for young children normally appear as short, clear, relatively complete episodes. But this story is made up of several episodes, including many distracted elements, and also a rather ambiguous ending.

The ending of a story should be analyzed as one of the main components revealing the underlying cognitive consciousness of narrative competence of narrators, so it is quite important in the narrative production. The ending of a narrative may reveal whether the narrator has clearly identified the theme of the story.

So the third problem we will address is the ending of the book. This picture book shows a typical object-oriented story, which means that the plot of the story is for the thematic purpose and the narrator of this book should focus on the final object while telling the story. In the end, the little boy took home a frog, but it does not clearly show whether the frog is the very one he has lost at first. But since finding the lost frog is the original goal of the whole book, and also the object which narrator should be focused on, the actual ending of the book did not show a clear point. There are many narrators do not understand the situation, even adults sometimes do not have a clear perspective on the ending of the story. Sometimes narrators fell from the track and the narrative they give are way far from what the story requires.

### **2.2.3 Social context and the participants**

Most of the bilingual children share a rather complex background than those who speak only one language. According to our research in Lyon, bilingual children who can speak Chinese and French normally come from two types of family, the mixed family and the immigrant family. Mixed family is a family whose members include those with immigration status. In our case, the mixed family refers to those families in which one of the parents is Chinese, he or she has married a French citizen. Most of the children who come from mixed family have been born in France. The second type is the immigrant family, in which both parent are Chinese. Children from this type of family could be born in France or in China.

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Children who come from the mixed family are comparatively less imbalanced in both languages than those from immigrant families. Generally, parents tend to spontaneously establish the intimate relationship with the child through his or her own mother tongue. As the parents have different mother tongue in mixed family, the environment surrounding the child at an early age is made up of two languages. And the roles of both languages are relatively more balanced than those in immigrant families. In addition, as parents come from different countries in mixed family, the union tends to have a more appropriate view for both languages and cultures, they are more likely to carry out bilingual early education for the child, so the child comes from a mixed family normally are better at both languages than those from a monolingual family, and when comes to narrative, they are more capable to produce a subject in two languages.

The case is slightly different in immigrant families. Children from immigrant families usually learn the mother tongue of their parents as the first language, in our case, the Chinese. They learn the French later than those who come from a mixed family. Since both parents are Chinese, the family usually appears as a monolingual environment for the child. The child can still have contact with another language by using the media broadcasts in the house, but the Chinese remains as a dominant language in the household. Chinese is considered the dominant language for the child before he or her receives a formal education in France. When comes to narrative, the child is usually more comfortable with the language they are adapted to, in this case, Chinese. Yet we cannot define those children as monolingual children, of course, since they can still use French, but generally, they appear more imbalanced in two languages.

Generally speaking, the relation between the two languages of bilingual children changes after they go to school and began to receiving a formal education. The school plays an important role in the development of the language in bilingual children.

For bilingual children in France, there are three options for education. First option is the local school. The local school is the monolingual school, in which all the classes are taught in French. Students are offered language classes in local school, they can choose a second language, but the options are limited, not many school offers Chinese class. The second option is local school plus extra language training outside

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the school. The child goes to monolingual school and also follows a Chinese language class outside the school. There are two kinds of Chinese language school in France: private association and formal institutes. Private associations are usually established by Chinese people who live in France, they offer Chinese classes to young people, especially to children. The Chinese classes in those associations would not cost much, and the teachers are usually Chinese who study or live in France. The formal institutes (for example Confucius institutes) are schools which offer classes for Chinese language and culture to learners of all ages. The teachers in those schools are usually sent by the Ministry of Education of China. They are well trained and more experienced. For bilingual children in primary school, they usually follow 2 hours of Chinese class per week. The third option is the multilingual school. The multilingual school is the school that teaches in two or more languages. The teachers are also well trained teachers sent by the Ministry of Education of China and the text books are the same as those used by students in China. In monolingual school, children can follow regular Chinese classes and French classes.

The situation of education always seems to be a dilemma for parents and children with an immigrant background. If parents choose normal school, which is certainly monolingual, children have the risk of losing the ability of speaking Chinese in the future. Since the environment of their school is monolingual and they spend most of their time in school, the French will soon become the dominant language. Most of the parents want their children to master both languages, and in order to do this, more language training is needed. But multilingual schools are really rare in France, even Chinese language classes outside of school are not easy to find; even if we are able to find Chinese classes outside school, we cannot ensure that children will learn the language well, as the time and practice of learning are all limited.

The participants we chose for the research are pupils of primary grades in a formal multilingual school in Lyon. They are children of 5 to 13 years old from first grade to fifth grade in the primary school. The age and numbers of the participants from different grades will be representing in Table 1.

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**Table 1**The number and ages of participants

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Numbers of students</b>	<b>Ages of pupils</b>
Grade 1	8	From 5 to 6.5 years old
Grade 2	9	From 7 to 8 years old
Grade 3	6	From 8 to 9 years old
Grade 4	14	From 9 to 10 years old
Grade 5	6	From 10 to 13 years old

In the fifth grade, the majority of the pupils are about 10 years old, the 13 years old child is an exception.

Most of the children were born in France (24 children), some of them were born in China (12 children), the others were born in another European country such as The Netherlands and Portugal. Most of the children are coming from mixed families which are combined by a Chinese and a French, some are from Chinese families (immigrations), and two of the participants are from French families in which both parents speak very good Chinese. Through the research, we have realized that the competence of Chinese language of the bilingual pupils in this school is relatively more advanced than those in monolingual school (normal local schools), since they are receiving a formal multilingual education.

#### **2.2.4 The process of the research**

During this research, we asked the participants to tell the frog story in two languages separately, each participant was separated from the rest of the team while doing the task. We recorded the process by means of recording equipment and then transcribed files in Chinese and French with two software products called Audacity and Praat.

Then we analyzed the three core components of the global structures of all the narratives in order to define the narrative competence of participants. The narrative productions can be scored for some certain evaluating conditions. To get positive score for the first component (the onset of the plot), the narrator has to mention explicitly that the boy is noticing that the frog is missing; for the second component, it requires explicit mention of the quest, which is the searching for the frog; for the third component, the

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narrator must mention clearly that the frog that the boy took home at the end of the story must be the same frog the boy has lost at the beginning.

By this way, we can not only testing their capacity of describing several separated events but also the capacity to relating those events and forming these events into a whole story. By making those bilingual children into telling the story in their two languages, we can thus compare their narrative competence by comparing their two version of the story.

### **3. The analysis**

It is quite usual that the analysis of researches about narrative based on two conditions, the age and the language. However, according to Berman and Slobin, the two conditions are not very useful for adult narrators. For adults, as they have already formed a stable narrative skill and developed cognitive awareness to fully understand the relationships of events, and they have mastered at least one language, so age and language can no longer be used as the criteria for evaluate the development of narrative competence.

However, in this study, we have chosen to study the narrative competence in bilingual children. First of all, the participants of our research are children, so the age should be considered as a condition for analyzing and evaluating narrative skills; second, the children are bilingual. We are going to make comparisons between the two languages in order to better evaluate the narrative competence in both languages of those children, so the analysis of languages is necessary.

To analyze every component, we compared the results in two ways: the vertical comparison, which is the comparison of narratives of narrators of different ages, aiming to find the tendency of development trend of each component; and the horizontal component, which is the comparison of narratives of two versions (the Chinese version and the French version) of this story in order to assess the narrative competence of these two languages of our participants, therefore to give a perspective to the balance condition of two languages of narrators.

#### **3.1 The result of the first component**

We are going to show the proportion of scored expression in two versions of narrative productions of all the participants, the proportions will be represented in

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comparative way, so the differences coming from age and language can be seen easily. We will first give two examples of the scored expression in two languages. And then we will analyze the results of these two languages.

- **Ex 1: Second grade** « Et ils ont regardé dans le bol, et il y avait rien. »

(And they looked into the bowl, and there was nothing.)

- **Ex 2: Fourth grade** 他们发现青蛙就不见了。

(They found that the frog has disappeared.)

According to the required criterion, these two sentences are explicitly mentioning that the protagonist found that the frog was missing.

- **Ex 3: Third grade** « La grenouille s'est échappée, après ils ont cherché. »

(The frog has run away, and then they sought it.)

This example is one of the expressions of the onset which cannot be scored, since instead of mentioning that the boy found that the frog is disappeared, the narrator expressed the event in two separate parts, which is “the frog run away”, and the protagonists tried to seek it.

**Table 2 The result of the first component**

Grade	The proportion of scored expression in Chinese version	The proportion of scored expression in French version
Grade 1	88%	88%
Grade 2	89%	89%
Grade 3	67%	84%
Grade 4	93%	86%
Grade 5	100%	84%

We will give the result of the comparisons of the scored expression of two versions, all the data will be represented in the Table 2.

The proportion of the scored expressions of first component of Chinese version from first grade to the fifth grade is generally in an ascending order; while the proportion of French version is mainly kept a stable state, the proportion fluctuates around 86%, but there is not an obvious tendency as the increasing of age.

For the first component, the result of Chinese versions is better than the French versions. It seems that while expressing the onset of the plot, the participants describe better and clearer in Chinese.

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### 3.2 The result of unfolding of the plot

To score the second component, the narrators are asked to give at least 3 references which explicitly mentioned the searching of the frog. Since there is a change of the location in the process of finding the frog and the outdoor activities are obviously more than the indoor activities, so the criterion also demands that the narrator should mention at least one reference of indoor activities and two references of outdoor activities. Now we give the example of scored expression of the unfolding of the plot.

- **Ex 4: Fourth grade** « Le petit garçon appelle la grenouille dans ce trou. »

(The little boy called the frog in the hole.)

- **Ex 5: First grade** 小男孩去了森林里，他在蚂蚁洞里找。

(The little boy went to the forest, he sought in the ant hole.)

These are the references which are well mentioned that the protagonists (the boy and the dog) tried to seek the frog. And all their activities are oriented to one goal: to find the frog. We can see in the Ex 5, the sentence has somehow a causal relationship between the two activities of the boy: he went to the forest in order to seek the frog. As the reference mentions the activity “seek” as well as the connotative objective of the activity “to find the frog”, the expression can be also seen as valid.

- **Ex 6: Fourth grade** 他去森林里面了。

(He went to the forest.)

The sentence of Ex 6 is an isolated expression of a single movement, the narrator simplified this phase of sequence as one activity, which is “went to the forest”, without mentioning the objective of this movement and other activities linked to the objective. So, the reference cannot be regarded as valid.

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**Table 3 The result of the second component**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>The proportion of scored narrative in Chinese</b>	<b>The proportion of scored narrative in French</b>
Grade 1	100%	62%
Grade 2	100%	100%
Grade 3	100%	83%
Grade 4	100%	100%
Grade 5	100%	100%

From the data represented by Table 3, we can see that the proportion of narratives which well mentioned at least three scored references in Chinese versions are very stable, narrators in all the classes maintained the same highest rate. It means that narrators can mention at least three references linked to the objective of the story while telling the story in Chinese. While the proportion of scored narrative in French is in a rather stable ascending order, the rate of five grades increased from 62% to 100%. However the result is obviously not as good as the result of Chinese version. The majority of the participants can mention at least three references when they are asked to tell the story in French, but there are still some students who cannot reach the assigned objective.

So, it is the same with the result of the first component, as it seems that for the second criterion, pupils still show more advanced narrative competence in Chinese than in French.

### **3.3 The result of the third component**

The resolution of the problem in this story means the recovery of the lost frog. This criterion requires narrators to explicitly mention that the frog the boy takes home is the same frog he lost. As this story is a goal-oriented story, all the activities and movements aim at the same objective, which is the recovery of the frog. The sequence of all the activities can be regarded as completed only when the narrator mentioned the original objective has been fulfilled. Here are some scored examples:

- **Ex 7: Second grade** « Alors le garçon a pris sa grenouille et repartit vers sa maison. »

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(Then the boy took his frog and went back home)

- **Ex 8: Fifth grade**小孩拿着那个逃跑的青蛙回了家。

(The child took the escaped frog back home.)

These two sentences are scored because they are well mentioned that the retrieved frog is “his frog” or “the escaped frog”.

- **Ex 9: Fourth grade**最后他拿了一只青蛙宝宝，就跑回家了。

(Finally, he took a baby frog, and then ran home.)

Ex 9 cannot be regarded as a valid expression of the resolution of the problem, since the narrator only indicated that the boy took a frog but did not mention that the frog is the lost one. The sequence of activities can only be considered as complete when the last phase of the sequence echoes the first phase, that is to say the mission can only be considered as fulfilled when the protagonist reaches the objective of the quest.

**Table 4 The result of the third component**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>The proportion of scored expressions in Chinese versions</b>	<b>The proportion of scored expressions in French versions</b>
Grade 1	25%	25%
Grade 2	11%	22%
Grade 3	16%	33%
Grade 4	14%	21%
Grade 5	16%	16%

The result of the third criterion is highly different from the results of other criteria. Scored expressions of this criterion are much less than that of other criteria. Proportions of scored expressions of both versions show all of them an obvious descending order from grade 1 to grade 5. And also different from former two criteria, the proportions of scored expressions in Chinese versions of all five classes are lower than that of the French versions.

It seems that most of the children are very capable to give a clear beginning and a coherent process of the story, but are not very good at telling a clear ending which aims the objective of the story. And also, in this part, children are more likely to give the requested ending in French, but still, the valid expressions are few. If we compare

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the result of the third criterion with the other result of the first and second criterion, the conclusion is more obvious: even the result of the third criterion of French versions seems more positive than that of Chinese versions, the proportion of scored expressions of third criterion in French is still much lower than that of other two criteria. So, we can state the whole performance of the third criterion is relatively worse than that of the other criterion.

Actually, as the frog story is determined as a goal-oriented story by the successive generations of researchers, so we decided that the final ending of the story is unique and irreplaceable. However, we can hardly say that there is single objective story, because narrators with different knowledge stock and life experiences will give different views of one story, each one has his/her own perspective on events. So it is actually normal that the endings given by narrators are different from the ideal ending and also different from one another. And in our point of view, the older the narrator is, the more knowledge and experiences he/she can have, the more likely the narrator tends to give different view of a story. And also, the ending tends to be more subjective, more attached to the narrator's own interest and inclination.

During this research action, older children tend to give various endings at the end of the narrative. The resolutions of problem they gave are more imaginary, more inclining to the newly discovered frog family; obviously they were highly distracted from the original quest by this part of the story. The final twist of the plot, which is the discovery of the frog family seemed arousing the interest of the young children, they tended to give more imaginary information of the frog family than a clear statement of recovery of the frog. We think this can also be regarded as a reason that they ignored the thematic objective of the story.

There was also another reason: generally, the recording of one narrator took about 4 minutes (fourth and fifth grade) to 9 minutes (first and second grade). So sometimes at the end of the process, children, especially older children became slightly impatient or anxious, instead of giving an ending that concerns about the recovery of the frog, they only stated that the boy went home with the dog and left the frog part unmentioned. This kind of ending however only exists in few narratives.

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#### **4. Conclusion**

On the basis of the theory of narrative structure and field research, we proposed the criterion of the global structure to evaluate the narrative competence of bilingual children who speak both Chinese and French in the multilingual school in Lyon. As the participants involved in the research are all typical examples of the bilingual children, we think our result of the research can be considered as a referential representation of the whole group of French-Chinese bilingual children in France.

From the three criteria, we found that the majority of bilingual children can easily give a clear goal-oriented onset of the plot and some references around the thematic objective of the story in both of their languages, but are not likely to give an ending that is aiming the resolution of the original problem. And the narrative competence of children's Chinese language seems stronger than that of their French in telling the onset of the plot and the process of the story, while weaker in telling the resolution of the problem of the story. We think, in an overall view of the whole research, the narrative competence of children's Chinese language are stronger than the narrative competence of French language between the age of 5 years old and 10 years old. The older the children become, the more likely they give an ending out of their subjective perspective.

The result shows that bilingual children even in a monolingual social environment can develop strong narrative competence of another language under a formal multilingual education, as well as the positive influences come from family and school. The potentials of children are enormous, and a multilingual education and the positive attitude of the society can be very helpful to the growth of our younger generation. We hope that our research enriches to the field of multilingualism and bilingual children's early education.

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