

# **Is the relative distribution of verbs and nouns modulated by socio-cultural influences? Evidence from bilingual infants and toddlers in Malaysia.**

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**Abstract:** Early vocabularies in most languages tend to contain more nouns than verbs. Yet, the strength of this noun bias has been observed to vary across languages and cultures. Two main hypotheses have aimed at explaining such variations; either that the relative importance of nouns vs. verbs is language-specific, or that socio-cultural influences shape early vocabulary structures. The present study compares the relative distribution of verbs and nouns, in English, between two groups of bilingual infants and toddlers; Malay-English and Mandarin-English. We found that early English lexicons of Mandarin-English bilinguals contained more verbs than in the English lexicon of Malay-English bilinguals, in both comprehension and production. We discuss the potential role of socio-cultural influences on the vocabulary structure in young users of a language.