

**Language development in bilingual children with language disorders:
The case of a French-Greek speaking child with Specific Language Impairment¹**

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Résumé

Le but de cette étude est d'examiner les capacités langagières d'un enfant bilingue français-grec dysphasique par le biais de production de structures langagières et la comparaison de ses performances avec celles d'enfants monolingues dysphasiques parlant soit le français, soit le grec. Nous avons étudié les performances de l'enfant dans les domaines de l'accord sujet-verbe, des pronoms compléments et des phrases interrogatives. Les résultats ont montré le rôle important joué par la langue principalement au niveau des pronoms compléments alors que pour les autres structures les performances sont semblables à quelques différences près. Nous soutenons que les caractéristiques partielles des langues grecque et française façonnent de façon significative le comportement langagier de l'enfant. De plus et après une approche comparative de nos données avec des données semblables d'enfants monolingues grecs ou français dysphasiques, nous argumentons en faveur de la thèse selon laquelle le bilinguisme n'aggrave pas les difficultés langagières dans la dysphasie.

Mots-clés

Bilinguisme ; langue française ; langue grecque ; dysphasie.

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1. Introduction

Specific language Impairment (or Developmental Dysphasia) is a genetically based developmental disorder of language acquisition in the absence of mental retardation, sensory, physical or emotional limitations (Bishop 1997, Leonard 1998). Whilst the primary deficit of these children is manifested in the domain of language, it is quite common that these children show deficits in other specialized cognitive domains/functions, for example in the phonological short term memory (see Ullman & Pierpont, 2005, for a current review of the relevant literature).

Current research on Specific Language Impairment (SLI) has raised the issue of language development by SLI children who are exposed to two languages since birth (Paradis et al. 2003; Paradis Crago & Genesee 2005/2006). There is a strong theoretical and clinical motivation for carrying out research on bilingual children with SLI. First, these studies can enhance our understanding of language as a cognitive function by elucidating the effect of bilingualism on language development of language impaired bilingual children. Second, these studies can contribute to the appropriate clinical treatment of bilingual language impaired children by indicating whether learning two languages simultaneously can benefit or not the language impaired children (see Rothweiler 2007, for a discussion).

There are a few studies in the last years that investigated the effect of learning two languages on the language abilities in SLI. Whilst some of those concern SLI children who learn a second language (Crutchley, Conti-Ramsden & Botting 1997, Orgassa & Weerman 2008; Stavrakaki et al. 2008), some others deal with SLI children exposed to two languages since birth (Paradis et al. 2003). As pointed out by Paradis et al. (2003), only those studies on SLI children with simultaneous bilingualism can show what the effect of bilingualism on language disordered children is. This is so because according to Paradis et al. (2003) learning a second language is usually based on a limited linguistic input; hence, it is not clear whether the language problems in SLI children learning an L2 should be attributed to the limited linguistic input or to the effect of L2 learning on SLI.

The findings of current studies on bilingual (since birth) SLI children indicate that bilingualism per se does not cause any particular problems to the SLI children. Paradis and collaborators (2003, 2005/2006) came to this conclusion on the basis of detailed comparisons between monolingual French and English speaking SLI children with bilingual French-English children. In particular, they tested the SLI children's performance on the production of object pronouns in French and English as well as on the production of past tense in French and English. The French-English SLI children performed like monolingual French and English SLI children. In particular, they showed problems with past tense marking in French and English and had less difficulty with object pronouns in English than with object clitics in French. Paradis et al. (2003, 2005/2006) suggested that this pattern of performance reveals that morphology is particularly vulnerable in monolingual and bilingual SLI children. Therefore, they concluded that bilingualism per se does not aggravate the language difficulties in SLI children.

The present study aims at investigating the performance of a bilingual French-Greek child with Specific Language Impairment on the production of object clitics, wh-questions and verb agreement morphology. In addition, we compare the performance of the bilingual SLI child with the performance of monolingual French

and Greek SLI children on the same linguistic structures as reported in the SLI literature.

Before presenting our experimental study, we provide a brief review of the morphological and syntactic abilities of Greek and French SLI children with a particular emphasis on the production of subject-verb agreement, object clitics and wh-questions.

1.1 Specific Language Impairment in French and Greek

Recent studies on SLI in French and Greek indicate severe limitations in the acquisition of morphology and syntax and confirm the characterization of the morphosyntactic problems as a 'hallmark' of SLI (Bishop, 1994). Whilst some particular linguistic markers, which help clinicians to make differential diagnosis of SLI, are language dependent, other linguistic markers have a cross-linguistic validity and constitute a reliable clinical marker for many languages (for a review see Leonard 1998). A comparison of the findings from studies on Greek and French children with SLI reveals a number of similarities and differences in the linguistic performance of these children. More specifically, verb morphology appears to be impaired in both Greek and French (Leonard 1998; Stavrakaki 2005). Whilst in Greek the impairment is mainly manifested in the domain of subject-verb agreement and not in tense marking,² in French, tense marking is more impaired than subject-verb agreement (Paradis & Crago, 2001: 288). In addition, in Greek, subject-verb agreement is selectively impaired as only two verb persons, namely the 2nd singular and the 2nd plural are significantly affected. Furthermore, whilst preschool age SLI children have difficulties in the acquisition of subject-verb agreement, the school age SLI children do not show any impairment in this domain (Stavrakaki 2001; see Stavrakaki 2005 for a review of the relevant literature and references therein). This radical, age-dependent, improvement of the Greek SLI performance on verb agreement morphology is presumably due to their exposure to a morphologically rich language and contrasts with findings from other languages, e.g. English, in which problems with verb morphology persist for a long period of time (Rice, Wexler, & Hershberger 1998). By contrast, data from monolingual French speaking children with SLI indicate consistent deficits in the tense domain (Jakubowicz, Nash & van der Velde 1999; Paradis & Crago 2001). As reported by Paradis & Crago (2001) accuracy scores decrease considerably for finite tense-bearing verbs compared to finite non-tense bearing verbs.

Another particularly vulnerable aspect of the linguistic performance of French SLI children concerns object clitics. All current studies report severe problems in the domain of object clitics (Jakubowicz et al. 1998; Paradis, Crago and Genesee 2005/2006) and attempt to explain the SLI performance in terms of the linguistic properties of clitics. Whilst there is a consensus on the impaired status of object clitics in French SLI, in Greek the SLI performance on object clitics is much more complicated (Tsimpli & Stavrakaki 1999; Varlokosta 2002; see Stavrakaki 2005 for a detailed review of the literature). More specifically, the findings from the Greek

² Most of the studies on Greek SLI indicate that subject-verb agreement is more impaired than tense marking (see Stavrakaki 2005 for a review of the current findings on SLI in Greek) with some exceptions (e.g. Stamouli 2000; Stavrakaki 2005 for review and references therein).

language appear to be quite conflicting: some SLI children have problems with object clitics whilst others do not. This within (Greek) language variation can be explained as follows: First, the factor of chronological and (consequently) language age is crucial. A critical review of the findings reveals that preschool children are more impaired than school age children and adolescents. Second, the factor of severity of language problems in SLI may be crucial: however, it cannot be assessed since many SLI studies in Greek do not provide detailed clinical profiles of the SLI participants (for a review, see Stavrakaki, 2005). Whatever the reason for heterogeneity in the SLI performance is, the overall comparison between Greek and French data concerning object clitics reveals that Greek SLI children perform better than French SLI children on the production of object clitics.

This between-language contrast in the SLI performance reduces significantly when we examine aspects of complex syntax, e.g. *wh*-questions. *Wh*-questions cause severe difficulties in French and Greek SLI children (Hamman 2006; Markopoulou 2006; Stavrakaki 2002, 2006). Whilst Greek SLI children appear to perform better on *wh*-questions when they grow up, they still show significant deficits in the production of object *wh*-questions (Stavrakaki 2006). Detailed error analysis of the Greek data revealed that a very frequent error type attested in the SLI data concerned the incorrect case marking³ of the post-verbal subjects in object *wh*-questions (Stavrakaki 2006). In particular, the post-verbal subject was marked for accusative instead of nominative case. On the other hand, detailed data analysis of the French SLI children performance on the question production indicated difficulties starting with an inverted structure *a-t-il* ('has he') when yes-no questions were elicited (Hamann 2006). When *wh*-questions were elicited, the results indicated problems with *wh*-questions requiring *wh*-fronting and inversion (Hamann 2006).

1. The present study

2.1 *The clinical profile of the SLI child*

The SLI child of this study is a boy, bilingual speaker of French and Greek from birth. He was born in Athens; his father is Greek and his mother is French. At the time of testing he was 9 year old. He was diagnosed with SLI in French and Greek. In particular, he was diagnosed with SLI in French by a multidisciplinary team in a French hospital (CHU Timone-enfants de Marseille); this diagnosis was confirmed by psychologists and speech and language pathologists for Greek. Pre-experimental IQ assessment on the basis of the WISC-III^{GR} (Georgas et al. 1997) indicated normal non-verbal IQ as well as significant difference between the verbal and non-verbal IQ performance (118 and 82 respectively). Further pre-experimental assessment including subparts of the Diagnostic Verbal IQ (DVIQ) Test for Greek children (Stavrakaki & Tsimpli 2000) showed linguistic deficits in Greek. More specifically, the child appeared to have significant problems with sentence repetition. We tested the child's performance on sentence repetition in Greek and French as we adapted the sentence repetition subpart of the DVIQ test to French. The child showed deficits in sentence repetition in Greek and French. Further examination in the domain of verbal short-term memory in French indicated significant problems. In addition to his significant problems with oral language, the SLI child showed difficulties with

³ In Greek, Noun Phrases (NPs) are marked for case (nominative vs. accusative).

reading in French and Greek. He started receiving speech and language therapy services in Athens in Greek while he was attending a Greek nursery school in Athens. Then, his parents decided to send him to the French school in Athens. He continued receiving speech and language therapy services but not in Greek. Since he went to the French school in Athens, he has received speech therapy in French by a speech and language therapist who is a native speaker of French. At the time of testing he was going to the French school in Athens and receiving speech and language therapy in French. The family spoke French at home, so French was the dominant language at home at the time of testing.

2.2 *The experimental tasks: Materials and procedure*

We have used elicited production tasks to assess the SLI child's performance on the production of (i) subject-verb agreement (ii) object clitics and (iii) wh-questions. The SLI child was individually tested by the second author of this paper, who is a speech and language therapist, native speaker of French, working in Athens for more than 20 years. Details are provided below.

- *Subject-verb agreement*

The child was visually and orally presented with the following words: I; you; daddy; you and I; you and your daddy; mum and daddy. All these words were presented within circles. An example of the procedure is as follows: The speech and language therapist pointed to the circle with the words 'you and your daddy' while at the same time she said: 'you and your daddy *write* a letter'. Then the speech and language therapist asked the child to use the same verb but for the words of another circle that she was pointing to. In total, 120 verb forms elicited in this way, 60 for Greek and 60 for French. All verbs were of high frequency in Greek and French.

- *Object clitic pronouns*

The child was presented with a picture depicting a transitive event, e.g., an elephant kicking a dog (cf. Jakobowitz et al. 1998 for a similar experimental method). The probe sentence and target response are shown below in (1a&b):

(1) a. Probe

What is the elephant doing to the dog?

b. Target response:

(O *elefantas*)⁴ *ton htipa* (in Greek)

L'éléphant le frappe (in French)

'The elephant is hitting it'

- *Wh-questions*

The methodology developed by Stavrakaki (2001), who followed Crain & Thornton (1998), for wh-question elicitation was employed. To elicit wh-questions, games were designed in which the child asked a puppet a question about a scenario acted out with toys. Subject and object *who* and *which-NP* questions were elicited. Six exemplars for each question type were tested giving a total of 24 responses.

For *which-NP* questions there were three animals, of which two were identical. In particular, suppose there were two monkeys in the workplace and a rhino was chasing one of them. Then the experimenter proceeded as follows:

⁴ The overt subject may be omitted in Greek because Greek is a null subject language.

- (2) a. Experimenter: In this story, the rhino chased one of the monkeys.
Ask the puppet which one.

b. SLI child (target response): *Pion pithtiko kinijise o rinokeros* (in Greek)

Quel singe le rhinocéros a-t-il poursuivi? (in French)

‘Which monkey did the rhino chase?’

For the elicitation of *who*-questions, three different animals were used in each story. Consider the example below:

- (3) a. Experimenter: ‘In this story, the rhino chased the monkey’.
‘Ask the puppet who’.

b. SLI child: *Pion kinijise o rinokeros?* (in Greek)
‘Qui le rhinocéros a-t-il poursuivi ?’ (in French)
‘Who did the rhino chase?’

2.3 Results

The bilingual SLI child’s correct performance on subject-verb agreement, object clitics and wh-questions in Greek and French is presented below in Table 1.

Table 1. Correctness scores (%) for subject-verb agreement, object clitics and wh-questions

LANGUAGE	S-V AGREEMENT	OBJECT CLITICS	WH-QUESTIONS
French	88.33 (53/60)	50 (4/8)	58.33 (14/24)
Greek	98.33 (59/60)	100 (8/8)	33.33 (8/24)

- Subject-verb agreement

As Table 1 shows, the SLI child performed (almost) at ceiling on all verb types in Greek and produced no morphological errors. He only made a phonological error, in particular, he produced ‘*pienune*’ instead of ‘*pinune*’ (drink-3p). He showed a high level of correct performance in French as he only produced a few errors. More specifically, he produced 7 errors. The errors he produced included incorrect suffixes for the 3rd person plural and non-existing verb forms (e.g. *nous finions* instead of *nous finissons*: we finish).

- Object clitics

Whilst the child performed at ceiling on the production of object clitics in Greek, he showed difficulties in French as his correctness score was 50%. He produced errors including gender errors (N=2), replacement of the clitic pronoun with a strong

pronoun (N=1) and lexical errors (N=1), namely replacement of the target verb with a more frequent verb. An example of his incorrect performance is shown below in (4)

- (4) a. SLI child's response: Elle la lave
She-her-wash
b. Target form: Il la lave
He-her-wash
'He is washing her'

- *Wh-questions*

The child showed severe problems with the production of wh-questions in French and Greek. The correctness percentages for which/who subject and object questions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correctness scores (%) for which/who subject and object questions

LANGUAGE	WHICH-S	WHO-S	WHICH-O	WHO-O
French	83.33 (5/6)	83.33 (5/6)	0 (0/6)	66.67 (4/6)
Greek	50 (3/6)	66.67 (4/6)	16.67 (1/6)	0 (0/6)

The child performed better on the production of subject than object wh-questions in both languages. In addition, he performed better on subject questions in French than in Greek. By contrast, his overall performance on object questions is quite similar in Greek and French. In sum, his performance on wh-questions is remarkably low in both languages, as shown in Table 1. Examples of the error types attested for subject and object wh-questions in French and Greek are presented below:

- *Which-subject questions:*

French

Lexical error: An incorrect NP is produced (N=1)

- (5) a. SLI child: Quel chameau a embrassé *le chameau*?
Which camel kissed *the camel*?
b. Target: Quel chameau a embrassé le rhinoceros?
'Which camel kissed the rhino?'

Greek

Case error: Production of NPs and which-phrases in neuter gender, which is underspecified for the feature of case (N=3)

- (6) a. SLI child: Pio elefanta kinigise to ipopotamo?
Who-NEUTER elephant-ACC chased the hippo-ACC
b. Target: Pios elefantas kinigise ton ipopotamo?
Which elephant-NOM chased the hippopotamus-ACC
'Which elephant chased the hippopotamus?'

- *Who-subject questions:*

French

Phonological error (N=1)

(7) a. SLI child: *Quil a frappé le chien?*
Who kicked the dog?

b. Target: *Qui a frappé le chien?*
'Who kicked the dog?'

Greek

Case error: Production of NPs and who-pronouns in neuter gender, which is underspecified for the feature of case/incorrect case⁵ (N=2)

(8) a. SLI child: *Pio kinigise ton ipopotamos?*
Who-NEUTER chased the-ACC-hippopotamus-NOM

b. Target: *Pios kinigise ton ipopotamo?*
Who-NOM-MASCULINE chased the hippopotamus-ACC
'Who chased the hippopotamus?'

- *Which-object questions*

French

Subject-for-object questions/no inversion (N=3)

(9) a. SLI child: *Quel homme a poursuivi le chat?*
Which man followed the cat?

b. Target: *Quel homme le chat a-t-il poursuivi?*
'Which man did the cat follow?'

Yes/no question instead of who-object questions (N=1)

(10) a. SLI child: *Le chameau le rhinocéros a-t-il embrassé?*
The camel the rhino kissed?

b. Target: *Quel chameau le rhinocéros a-t-il embrassé?*
'Which camel did the rhino kiss?'

Lexical retrieval error (N=2)

(11) a. SLI child: *Quel éléphant l'o..... a-t-il poursuivi?*
What elephant the o... chased?

b. Target: *Quel éléphant l' hippotamme a-t-il poursuivi?*
'Which elephant did the hippopotamus chase?'

Greek

Subject-for-object questions (N=4)

(12) a. SLI child: *Pios elefantas kinigise ton ipopotamo?*
Which elephant chased the hippopotamus?

b. Target: *Pion elefanta kinigise o ipopotamos?*
'Which elephant did the hippopotamus chase?'

⁵ In some cases the SLI child produced who-questions without marking the who-pronoun for nominative case/masculine gender (e.g. *pio filise ton elefanta?*: *who-NEUTER kissed the elephant-ACC?*; target: *who-MASCULINE-NOM* kissed the elephant-ACC?). Since the child could use the pronoun 'who' in neuter gender (unmarked for case) to refer to the animal used in the elicitation task, we considered these responses correct. Notice that in Greek, the grammatical gender of the word 'animal' is neuter.

Case error: incorrect case marking for the post-verbal subject (with a lexical retrieval error in (13a)) (N=1)

- (13) a. SLI child: Pion gaidaro filise ti gata?
Who-donkey-ACC kissed the-cat-ACC
b. Target: Pion gaidaro filise o skilos?
'Which donkey did the dog kiss?'

- *Who-object questions*

French

Subject-for-object questions (N=2)

- (14) a. SLI child: Qui a embrassé l' éléphant?
Who kissed the elephant?
Target: Qui l' éléphant a-t-il embrassé?
'Who did the elephant kiss?'

Greek

Case (and/or gender) errors (N=2)

- (15) a. SLI child: *Pio* kinigise to ippopotamos?
Who-NEUTER chased the-NEUTER-hippopotamus-NOM?
b. Target response: Pion kinigise o ipopotamos
Who-MASCULINE-ACC chased the hippopotamus-NOM
'Who did the hippopotamus chase?'

Ambiguous error: Case (and gender) error or subject-for-object question error⁶ (N=4)

- (16) a. SLI child: *Pio* filise ton skilo?
Who-NEUTER kissed the dog-ACC
b. Target response: Pion filise o skilos?
Who-ACC-MASCULINE kissed the dog-NOM
'Who did the dog kiss?'

2. Discussion

In this study, we tested the performance of a bilingual French-Greek speaking SLI child on the production of morphosyntactic structures, in particular, the production of subject-verb agreement, object clitics, and wh-questions. The results are summarized as follows:

- 1) The child showed almost the same level of performance on the production of subject-verb agreement in Greek and French with a slightly lower performance in French
- 2) The child showed significantly better performance on the production of object clitics in Greek than in French
- 3) The child showed low level of performance on the production of object wh-questions in both languages with more error categories in French than in Greek.

⁶ The child's response in (16a) can be interpreted as subject question, if the child referred to the *animal* used in the elicitation task when he said 'pio' (who-NEUTER/UNMARKED for case).

We adopt a comparative, cross-linguistic approach to discuss the findings above. First, we discuss the between-language differences attested in the bilingual SLI child's performance on the tested structures; second, we compare the bilingual SLI child's performance on the tested structures with that of monolingual Greek and French SLI children.

With respect to the between-language differences in the SLI child's performance, we examine the effect of two factors, namely, the clinical characteristics of the participant and the specific linguistic properties of Greek and French on the participant's performance. With respect to the clinical characteristics of the SLI child's profile, we underline that the child was receiving speech and language therapy in French at the time of testing while at the same time French was the language spoken at school and home. His significantly better performance on object clitic pronouns in Greek comes then as a surprise. A possible explanation could be that when he was younger he received speech and language therapy services in Greek. He had a better chance of improving his language abilities in Greek since he was exposed to a systematically structured speech and language therapy schedule at a very early stage. However, the child's chronological age was within the 'critical period' for language acquisition (see Lenneberg 1967, for the first use of the term 'critical period') when he was exposed to therapy services in French for the first time (first grade in the French primary school). Therefore, his earlier exposure to therapy services in Greek does not provide an adequate explanation for his better performance in Greek than in French.

A more promising explanation for the child's performance is related to the specific differences of Greek and French language. If these properties are crucial for the bilingual SLI child's performance, then they must be crucial for the monolingual SLI children's performance as well. In this respect, we expect the bilingual SLI child to show similar performance with that of monolingual SLI children on the tested structures. At this point, before we move on to analyze how the specific language properties affected the SLI children's performance in Greek and French, we provide a comparison between the performance of the bilingual SLI child and monolingual SLI children speaking Greek and French on the experimental structures.

- *Subject-verb agreement*

French SLI children are not impaired in the domain of subject-verb agreement (Paradis & Crago 2001). On the other hand, the Greek SLI children show difficulties in this domain at the preschool age (Stavrakaki 2005 for a review; Stavrakaki et al. 2008) whilst they show ceiling performance when they are at school age (Stavrakaki 2001). The high level of performance of the school-age French-Greek SLI child is within the pattern shown by monolingual SLI children.

- *Object clitic pronouns*

As pointed out in the introduction section, whilst for the French language problems with object clitics constitute a clinical marker for SLI, heterogeneous performance on the production of object clitics is reported for the Greek speaking SLI children. In this respect, the SLI child of our study performs within the expected performance range for French and Greek and shows difficulties in French but not in Greek. We underline that despite his problems with object clitics in French he did not omit clitics in contrast with the findings reported for French SLI children. A possible

explanation is as follows. First, the child was exposed to intensive speech and language therapy focused on object clitics and other pronouns; second, a possible transfer strategy from Greek to French cannot be excluded: Despite his failure to produce the target structures in French, he was aware of the pronoun (clitic) requirement in these structures. He, thus, produced a strong pronoun instead of the object clitic pronoun or made a gender error without omitting clitics.

- *Wh-questions*

The bilingual SLI child performed similarly with monolingual Greek and French SLI children on the production of *wh*-questions in terms of accuracy percentages and error types. We underline his difficulties with inversion in French and with correct case marking in Greek. Both patterns have been reported by studies on Greek and French SLI children (Hamman 2006; Stavrakaki 2002, 2006).

In sum, the profile of the French-Greek SLI child fits well with profiles reported for monolingual children with SLI, speakers of French and Greek. Our results show that bilingualism does not add to the language deficits of the SLI child.

Turning back to the issue of the specific language effects on the SLI performance, we focus on the following properties of his performance (i) almost same level of performance on subject-verb agreement in Greek and French: It seems that subject-verb agreement acquisition in SLI is facilitated in Greek and French by their inflectional properties: the former is a language with rich inflection while the latter is a language with moderate inflection (Leonard 1998). (ii) Low level of performance on *wh*-questions in Greek and French: both French and Greek SLI children have problems with complex syntax. Specific language effects can be traced in the attested error types: case errors in Greek, (a language with overt case marking) and inversion errors in French (a language requiring inversion). (iii) Striking difference in the performance of the bilingual SLI child on the production of object clitics in Greek and French. Whilst both Greek and French are languages with object clitics, Greek (like Spanish and Romanian) is a clitic-doubling language but French (like Italian) is not (for a review of the literature see Tsakali 2006; Tsakali & Wexler 2004). In clitic doubling constructions, the clitic co-occurs with a co-referent DP that appears in post-verbal position (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou, 2000: 184). A possible consequence of this difference is that in the Greek language structures with object clitics may be more frequent than in French, since in Greek there is an additional structure (clitic doubling) in which clitics appear. However, we cannot investigate whether such a hypothesis holds because at least for Greek there are no frequency lists for syntactic structures. An additional theoretical consequence concerns the syntax of structures with object clitics. Whilst clitics form a syntactic unit with a verb and move to finite verb (Tense) in French (Jakubowicz et al. 1998), they can be base-generated in Greek⁷ (see Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2000 for a review of the literature). This implies that structures with object clitics are more difficult to acquire

⁷ It should be noted that according to some linguists clitics undergo movement in Greek (Philippaki-Warbuton et al. 2004; for a review of the literature see Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2000). There is no agreement among Greek linguists on the precise linguistic characterization of clitics. The details of this linguistic discussion, however, are beyond the aims of this paper.

in French than in Greek. This is indeed the case for typically developing children learning French and Greek as L1 (Grüter 2006; Tsakali 2006).

To summarize the discussion so far, the bilingual SLI child of our study performed like his monolingual SLI peers. He showed ceiling and near ceiling performance on the production of subject-verb agreement in Greek and French respectively. He showed severe problems with the production of wh-questions. His performance on object clitics was better in Greek than in French. Based on our findings, we suggest that bilingualism did not have any negative effect on his linguistic performance; we, thus, provide further support for the view that bilingualism per se is not a problem for the language impaired children (Paradis et al. 2003). In addition, we conclude that, to a large extent, the specific properties of each language, namely, Greek and French, play an important role in the manifestation of the deficit in SLI.

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