

# Emotion Regulation and Language Dominance in Bilingual Children

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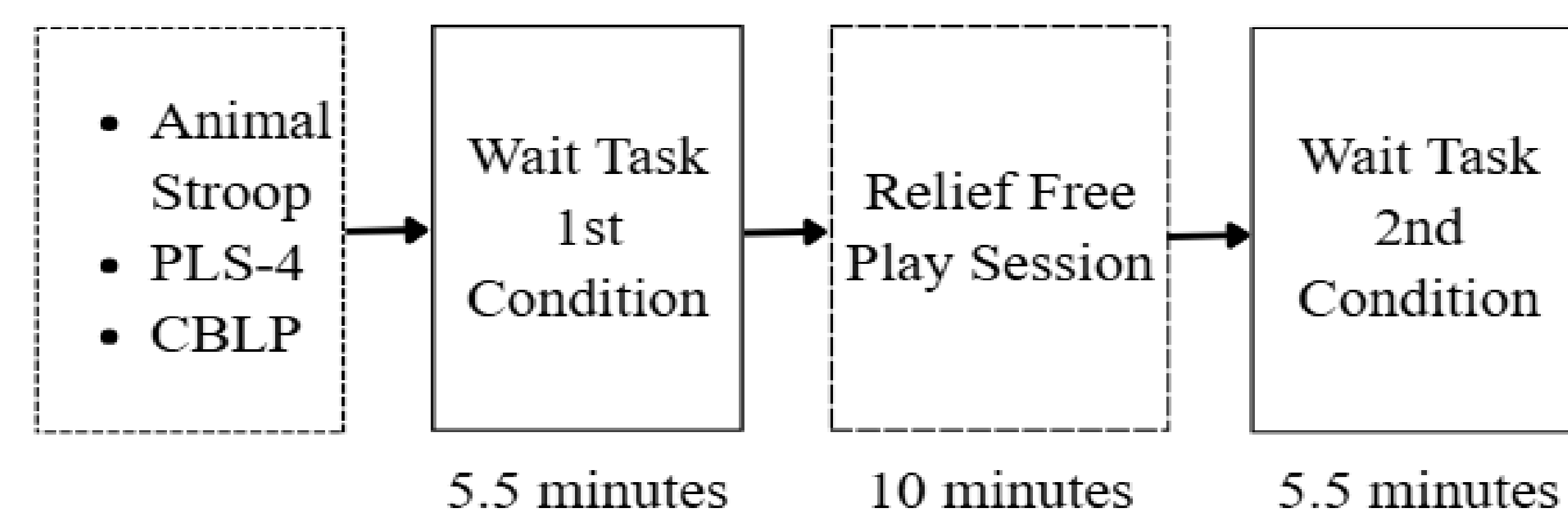
## Background

- Emotion regulation skills are important for children's socioemotional wellbeing. They facilitate the evaluation and monitoring of emotions, enabling reactions to be managed (Roben et al., 2013; Thompson, 1994).
- Emotion regulation (ER) outcomes are positively correlated with language skill levels and high executive function (EF) skill levels (Fields-Olivieri et al., 2024; Kopp, 1982, Rhoades et al., 2009)
- Bilingual children tend to have stronger EF skills than monolingual counterparts (Bialystok, 2017)
- If ER success is positively correlated with high language skill levels, then it is possible that children are using language to self-regulate
- If children use language for ER, perhaps bilingual children will be better at ER in their dominant language

## Hypothesis

Bilingual children will be better at ER in their dominant language (as opposed to their non-dominant language) because they are using language when regulating.

## Design Overview



## Methods

Participants: Spanish-English bilingual children ages 3-5

The following were measured:

- EF with the Animal Stroop
- Bilingualism with the Child Bilingual Language Profile (CBLP)
- Language skills with the Preschool Language Scales (PLS)

Each participant completed a waiting task in two conditions:

- Dominant Language
- Non-Dominant Language

These were counterbalanced:

- Condition A (English first, Spanish second)
- Condition B (Spanish first, English second).

The waiting task measured ER when facing frustration by leaving children in a room with a wrapped gift and asking them to wait for the researcher to come back into the room to open it. Participants were expected to wait 5.5 minutes.

Children were given a brief play session between tasks to avoid carryover effects from task 1 to task 2

## Results and Descriptive Analysis

Participants	Age (in months)	Condition	DL	NDL
P1	47	A	Spanish	English
P2	63	B	English	Spanish

**N = 2**

So far, data has only been collected from two participants.

Participant 1 was able to complete both waiting tasks successfully (waited the whole 5.5 minutes).

Participant 2 was able to complete the 1st waiting task successfully but the parent discontinued the 2<sup>nd</sup> waiting task because the child appeared upset.

During the tasks, both participants:

Used distraction to regulate their emotions by:

- Playing with the simple toy provided to them
- Walking around the room and even sitting on the floor
- Making faces/playing with their reflection on the mirror in the observation room

Used support seeking to engage in ER by:

- Walking outside of the room or close to the door to look for RA/caregiver

Participants also:

- Recurrently touched the gift and fidgeted with the box
- Showed frustration and negative feelings about being left alone in the room for the waiting tasks

## Conclusions

These observations did not provide any indication of whether language dominance might affect ER because participants waited the entire wait time in the task (or parent discontinued the waiting task).

Both participants showcased ER behaviors outlined in existing literature and relevant to the present study such as distraction (through play and movement) and support seeking (looking for RA/parents; Calkins et al., 1999).

## Future Directions

Moving towards the full study:

- Switch to a shorter language skill level assessment tool
- Diversify recruitment strategies to obtain a larger sample size
- Modify waiting task (prolong wait times) to provoke more frustration and more premature gift opening

## References

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