

Introduction

- Russian has a sophisticated case system with 6 base cases whose inflections may differ across 3 declensional classes, 3 genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter) and 2 numbers (singular and plural) → **Russian presents a great testing ground for examining how children acquire complex grammatical rules.**
- No agreement concerning the age of case-use onset and the order in which different cases emerge (Ceitlin, 2000; Gvozdev, 1981, 2007; Ionova, 2007; Gagarina & Voeikova, 2009).
- Additional challenge for acquisition of the Russian case system may be due to linguistic interference (in a bilingual context). We chose Russian-English bilinguals for examining how a language with a rich inflectional case system, like Russian, is maintained alongside a language without a case system at all, like English.

Aims & Hypothesis

- Investigate whether age-matched Russian monolingual children and Russian-English bilingual children follow the same timeline in the acquisition of the Russian nominal case markings.
- Identify quantitative and qualitative differences in case form productions of monolinguals and bilinguals for real and novel (pseudo) words in the experimental context.
- Unlike previous studies that examine specific aspects of case use, we examine a full set of oblique cases for regular nominal forms in the Russian language (across three declensions as well as plural forms) and identify the main areas of difficulty.

Materials and Procedure

Real words block

Response (if not, give a prompt): "поезд" ("train_NOM")

Response: "поезд" ("train_GEN")

Смотри, что это? Look, what is this?

Молодец! Да, это поезд! А здесь... Great job! Yes, this is a train. And here...

Дети едут на ... Children are riding the ...

Nonce words block

Response (if not, give a prompt): "бура" ("boog_NOM")

Response: "бура" ("boog_GEN")

Смотри, это бура! Повтори, пожалуйста! Look, this is a boog! Repeat, please

Молодец! А здесь... Great job! And here...

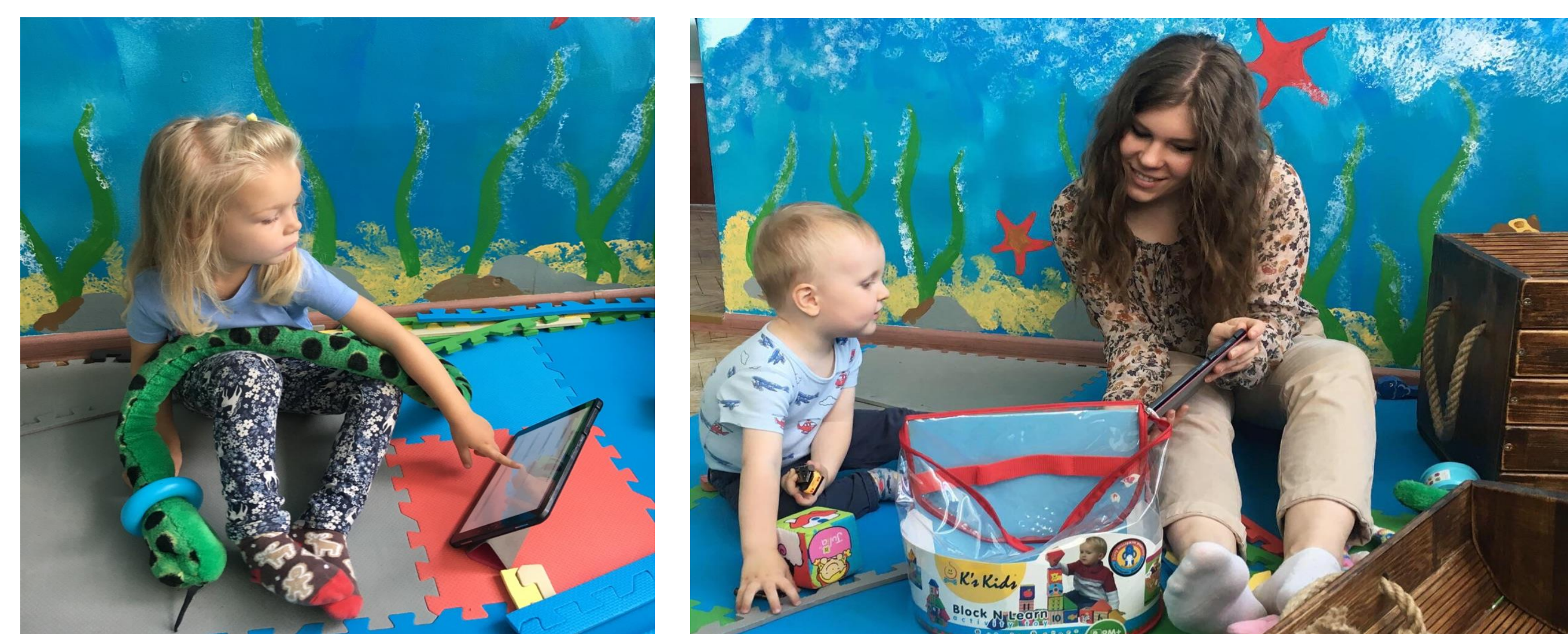
Мальчик держит маленького ... The boy is holding a little ...

Stimuli: 24 real life objects denoting 24 target word stimuli and 24 non-existing objects for the pseudowords; pseudowords were created by replacing 2 consonants in each target real word.

Task: a picture-based sentence completion task.

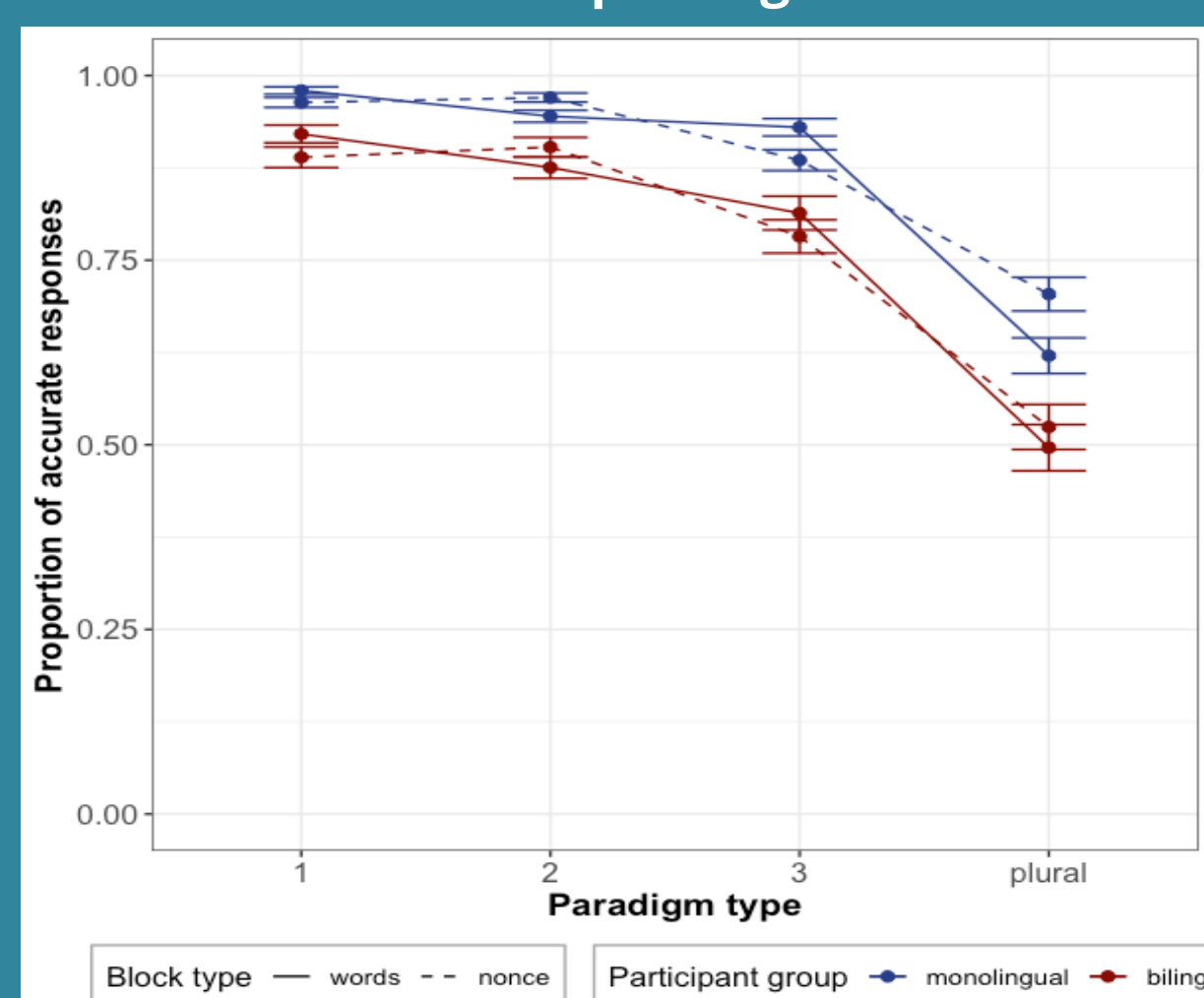
Participants

Age (years old)	Russian monolinguals	Russian-English bilinguals
2	14	4
3	13	5
4	13	9
5	14	12
total	54	30

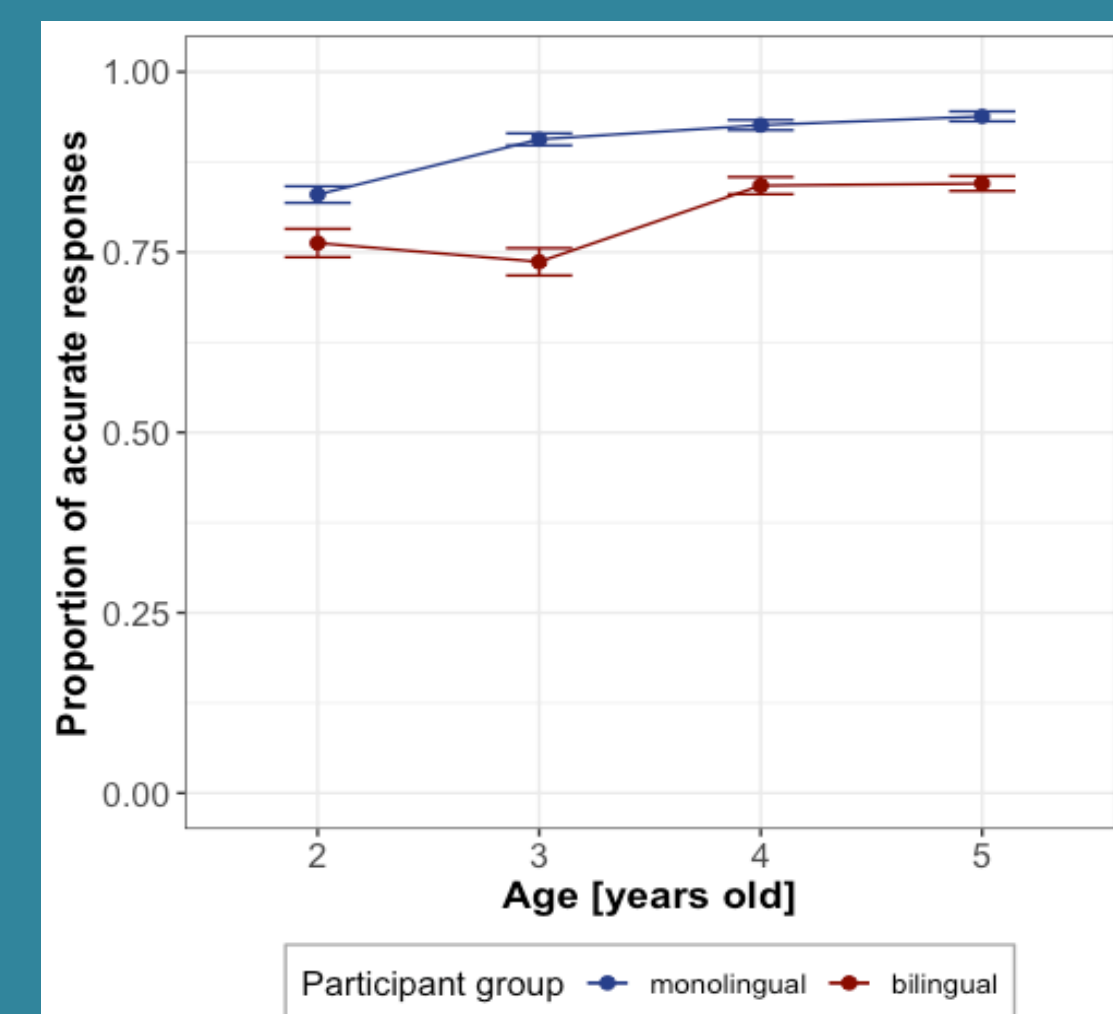


Quantitative results

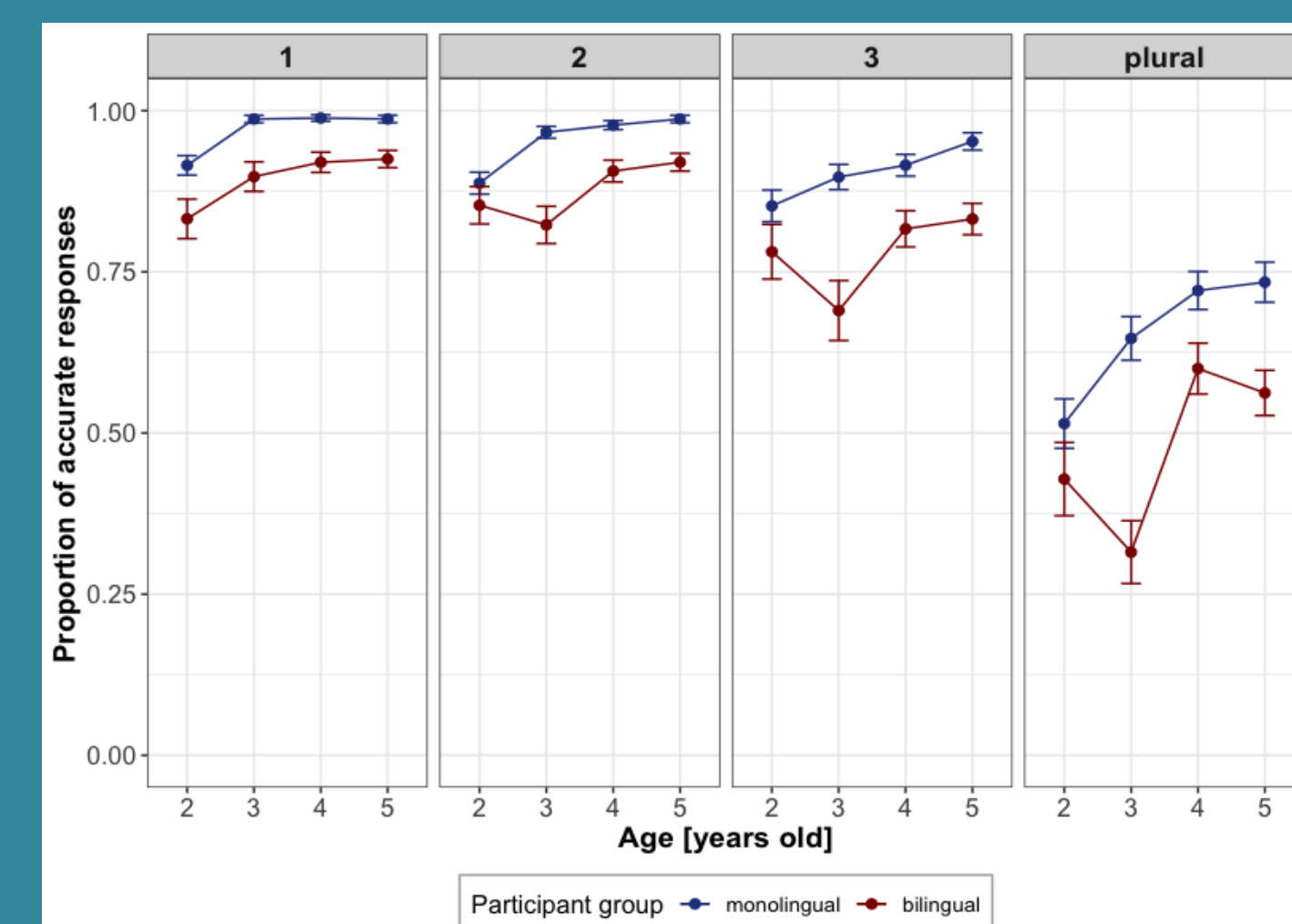
Proportion of accurate form productions by monolingual (blue) and bilingual (red) participants in words vs nonce blocks for different inflectional paradigms



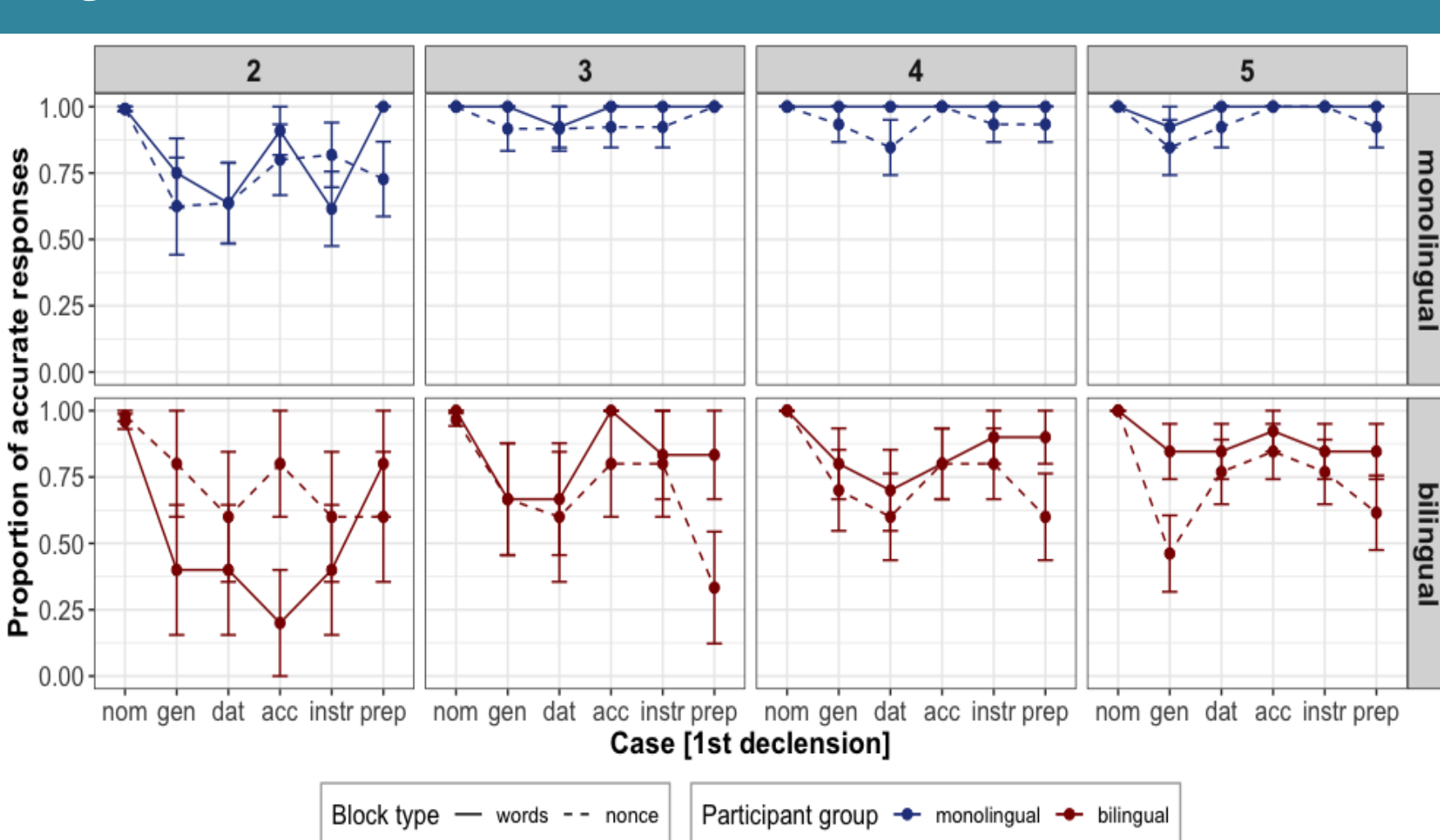
The proportion of accurate case productions across age in monolingual and bilingual groups (combined words and nonce words).



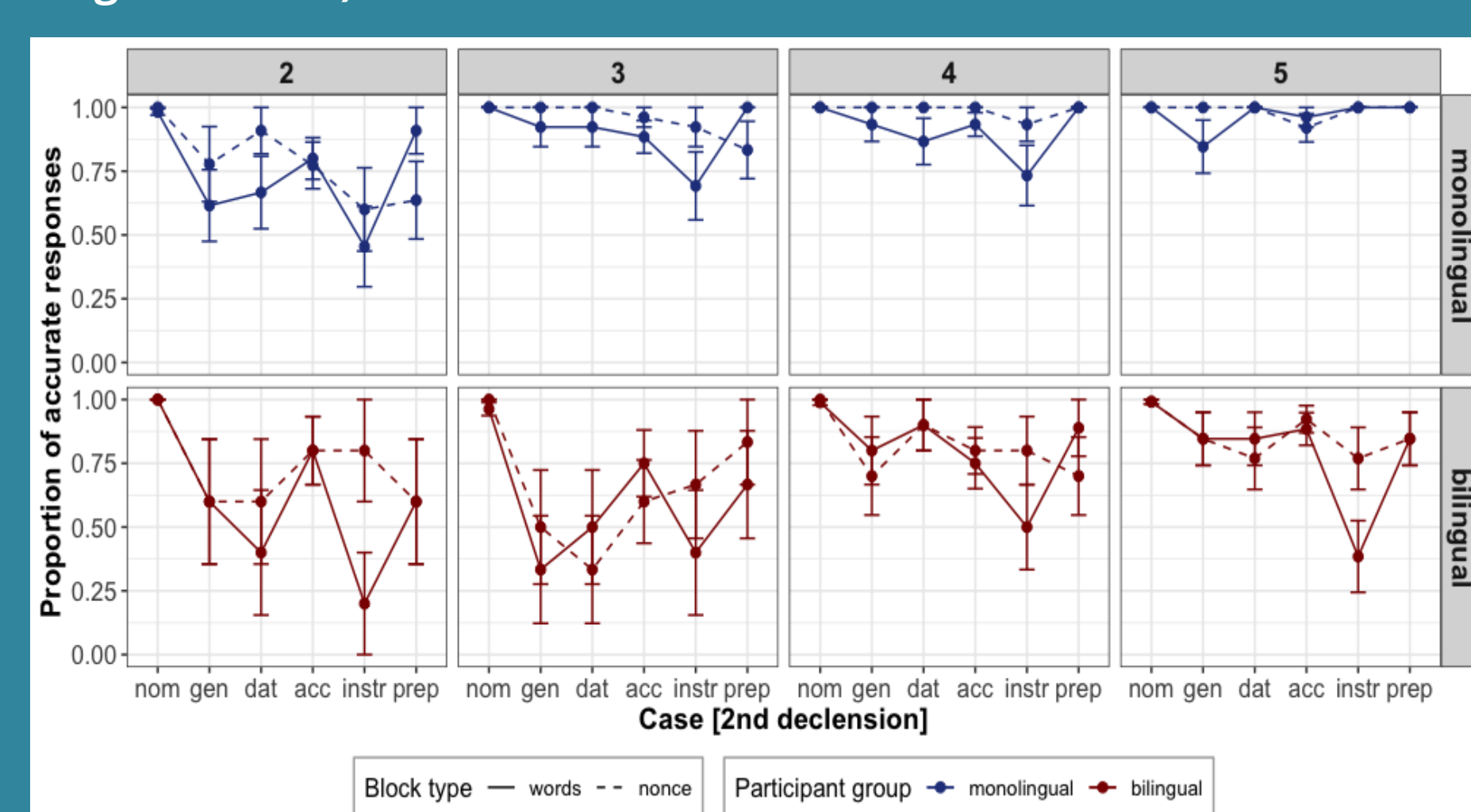
Combined proportion of accurate form productions in monolingual (blue) and bilingual (red) participants for words and nonce blocks depicted across different inflectional and age groups.



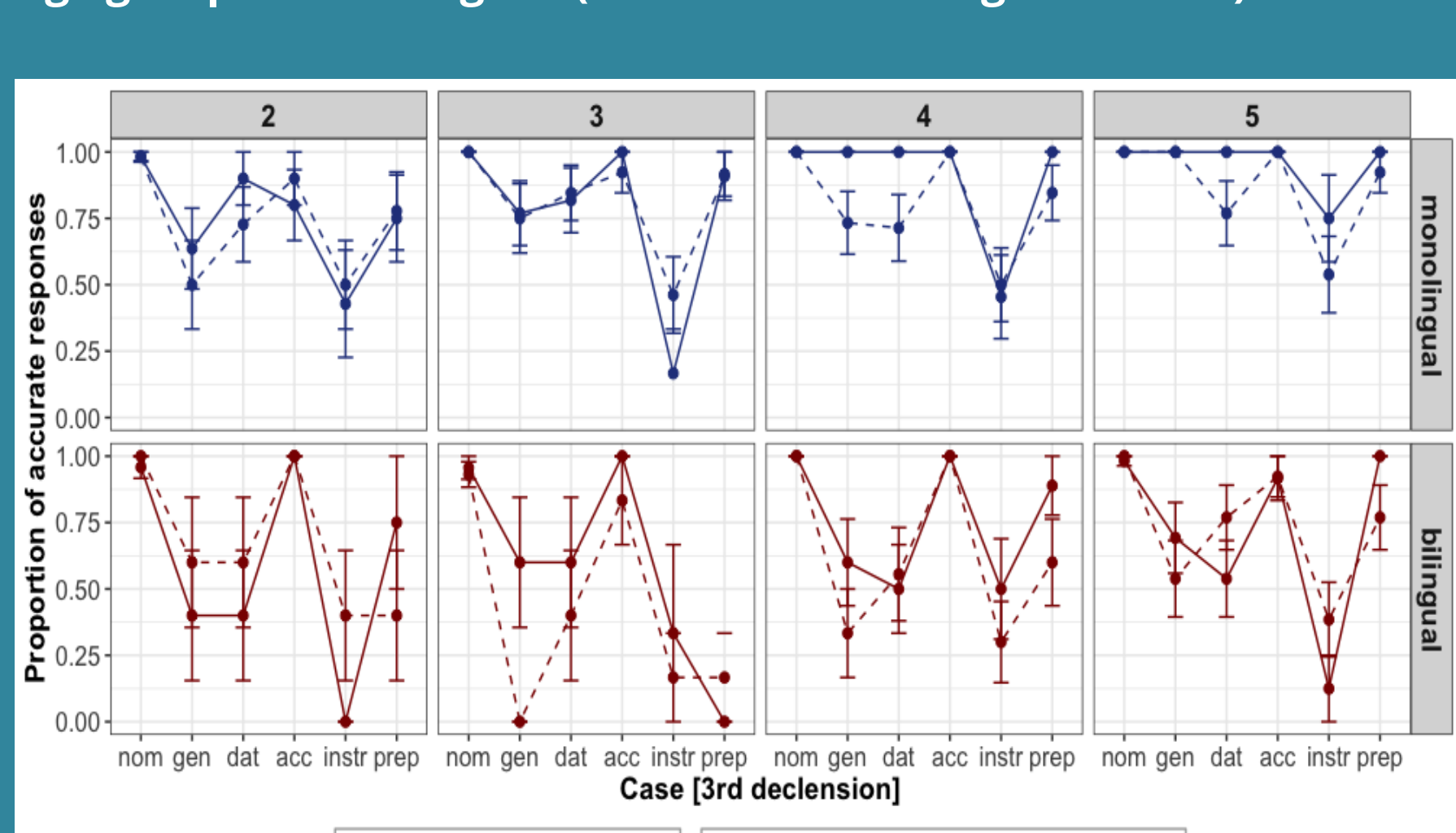
Proportion of accurate form productions in monolingual (blue) and bilingual (red) participants for words and nonce blocks across age groups in Paradigm 1 (1st declension singular forms).



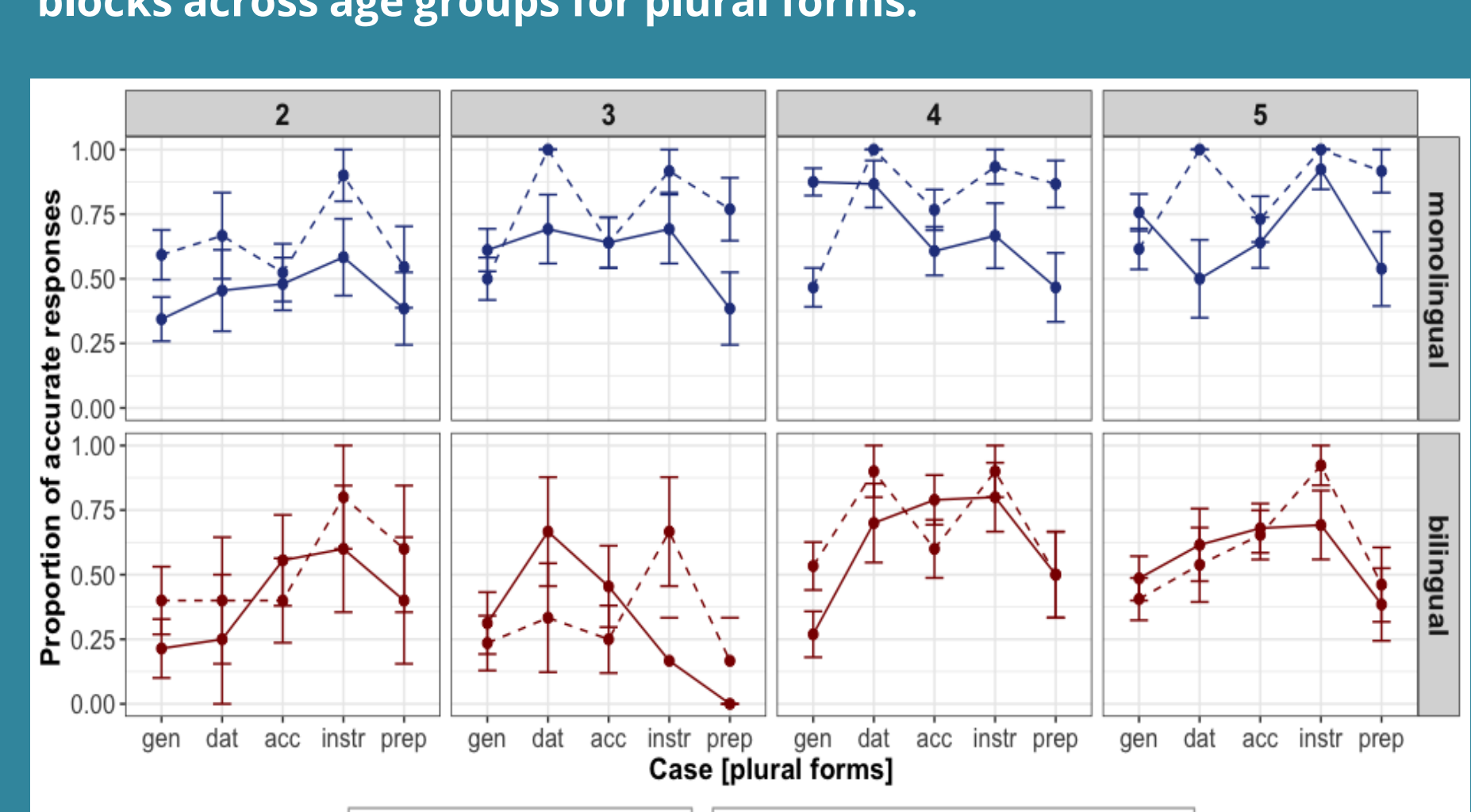
Proportion of accurate form productions in monolingual (blue) and bilingual (red) participants for words and nonce blocks across age groups in Paradigm 2 (2nd declension singular forms).



Proportion of accurate form productions in monolingual (blue) and bilingual (red) participants for words and nonce blocks across age groups in Paradigm 3 (3rd declension singular forms).



Proportion of accurate case productions in monolingual (blue) and bilingual (red) participants for words and nonce blocks across age groups for plural forms.



Qualitative results

Case substitution	Bilingual children				Monolingual children			
	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
Acc - Nom	27%	34%	22%	47%	21%	22%	10%	10%
Dat - Nom	15%	13%	19%	27%	15%	16%	14%	19%
Gen - Nom	33%	21%	30%	7%	30%	22%	1%	2%
Instr - Nom	13%	16%	15%	0%	18%	18%	0%	27%
Prep - Nom	12%	16%	15%	20%	15%	21%	21%	10%

Conclusions

- Both monolingual and bilingual children showed the greatest amount of errors in the plural forms;
- Both monolingual and bilingual children make most errors in the 3-rd declension nouns.
- 2-3-year-old monolingual children substitute oblique cases with the NOM case; bilingual children do nominative substitutions even at 4-5 years of age;
- Different timelines of case acquisition among declensional types;
- Children learn to generalize inflectional rules even before 2 years (no sig difference between words and pseudowords blocks).