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Word order in narrative discourse produced by Danish children with SLI

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- *Do difficulties with verb-second (V2) word order characterize Danish children with SLI ?*
- *Do word order problems correspond to use of nonfinite verbs in finite contexts as suggested by the EOI account?*

Danish – SVO with verb-second (V2) word order

Anna spiser is (*Anna eats ice cream*)
Nu spiser Anna is (*now eats Anna ice cream*)
Hvor vil Anna spise is? (*where will Anna eat ice cream?*)

V2 difficulties in Swedish, German and Dutch SLI

Narrative discourse
ecologically valid and useful in a wide age-range

Utterances with initial connectives, e.g. *then* or *suddenly,* are common in narratives: A cohesive device - with consequences for word order in Danish.

Method
Participants

	Children with SLI (SLI)	Age-matched controls (TDA)	Language-matched controls (TDL)
n	10	10	10
Age (years; months)	5;2 – 7;11 Mdn = 6;1	5;2 – 7;9 Mdn = 6;1	3;8 – 5;7 Mdn = 4;2
Expressive vocabulary	17 – 38 Mdn = 27.5	22 – 43 Mdn = 40.0	22 – 35 Mdn = 28.0
Number of utterances in narrative	30 – 85 Mdn = 41.5	26 – 71 Mdn = 45.5	24 – 78 Mdn = 37.0
MLU_w in narrative	3.47 – 5.73 Mdn = 4.80	5.44 – 6.81 Mdn = 6.25	4.24 – 7.19 Mdn = 5.03

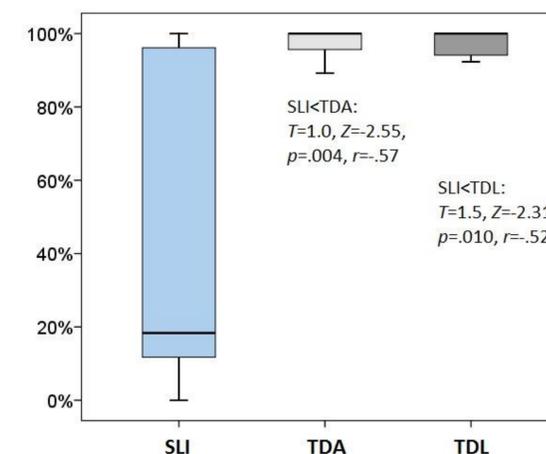**Story generation task** : *Frog, Where are you?* (Mayer, 1969)

Severin (SLI, 7;11)	så han kalder på frøen (*then he calls for frog$_{def}$*)
Alvin (TDA, 7;9)	og så råbte de ud efter den (*and then yelled they out for it*)
Laurits (TDL, 5;7)	så gik han ud i skoven langt langt og råbte på frøen (*then went he out in forrest$_{def}$ far, far and yelled for frog$_{def}$*)

Results
(1) XVS constructions (initial adverbial or object - typically '*then*' or '*wh*'-word)

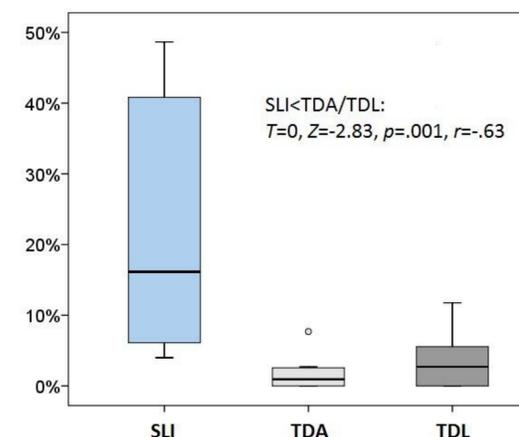|	SLI	TDA	TDL
Number of XVS	1 – 63 Mdn = 18.5	20 – 40 Mdn = 26.5	3 – 38 Mdn = 16.5
Percentage XVS of all utterances	2.1 – 74.1 Mdn = 56.9	50.9 – 76.9 Mdn = 54.8	7.1 – 77.8 Mdn = 51.4

Percentage XVS accurate

SLI<TDA: T=1.0, Z=-2.55, p=.004, r=-.57

SLI<TDL: T=1.5, Z=-2.31, p=.010, r=-.52

4 children with SLI above 90% XVS accurate	
Sam (6;11)	nu råbe de i hul (*now yell$_{inf}$ they in hole*)
6 children with SLI at or below 20% XVS accurate	
Severin (7;11)	så hjorten se (*then deer$_{def}$ see*)

Some Danish children with SLI clearly have difficulties with V2. Instead, they use XSV, i.e. rigid SV order.

Further exploration of the narratives
- Structure (global and local)
- Relevant information conveyed
- Use of complex verb forms and mental state expressions

(2) Nonfinite verbs (infinitive or participle) in finite contexts

	SLI	TDA	TDL
Number of nonfinite verbs	1 – 20 Mdn = 5.0	0 – 2 Mdn = 0.5	0 – 2 Mdn = 1.0
Nonfinite verbs in inaccurate XVS	Σ = 11 0 – 3 Mdn = 1.0	Σ = 0 0 Mdn = 0	Σ = 1 0 – 1 Mdn = 0
Nonfinite verbs in accurate XVS	Σ = 13 0 – 6 Mdn = 0	Σ = 2 0 – 1 Mdn = 0	Σ = 3 0 – 1 Mdn = 0

Percentage nonfinite for finite verbs

SLI<TDA/TDL: T=0, Z=-2.83, p=.001, r=-.63

Correlations between occurences of accurate XVS and non-finite verbs: Children with SLI: r_s= -.055, p= -.88

No direct relation between the use of nonfinite verbs in finite contexts and inaccurate word order in XVS constructions.