

MYTHS & REALITIES
about
EARLY DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNING

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"MYTH"

- > popular **belief** or tradition that has grown up around something or someone; **a belief** that embodies the ideals and institutions of a society or segment of society
- > an unfounded or false notion or **belief**

MYTHS MATTER

myths shape decisions



pessimistic myths about dual language learning
result in impoverished learning environments for
children

Why talk about dual language learning?

- ▶ linguistic reality – many children in Early Head Start and Head Start programs speak other languages at home and will learn English (and their home language) during the pre-school years – **DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS**
- ▶ designing effective programs for them requires an understanding of early dual language learning

I will talk a lot about dual language learning and dual language learners

- but, I am not advocating that all programs be bilingual
- some might focus on home language; some on English; some on both home language and English

MY GOALS

- ▶ to review research findings on a number of common myths that surround dual language learning
- ▶ to describe the implications of this research for dual language learners and their caregivers in HS & at home
- ▶ to talk about appropriate learning environments for dual language learners – whether your program is home language-only, English-only; or bilingual

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CAVEAT 1: THE MAGIC MODEL

- ★ there is not one best model for all sites
- ★ the program model that is optimal for one community is not necessarily optimal for another community
- ★ young children are resourceful and powerful learners
- ★ equally positive developmental outcomes can be achieved via different models

THE "BEST" PROGRAM MODEL

- reflects:
 - ★ *Head Start Program Performance Standards*
 - ★ *local goals and motivations*
 - ★ *state and local regulations*
 - ★ *realities about local population*
 - ★ *local resources, including personnel*
 - ★ *other.... history, future*

CAVEAT 2: RESEARCH HAS ALL THE ANSWERS

- ★ research does not have all the answers
- ★ researchers have studied only a few of the issues
- ★ the issues they have studied are often not the same as the issues practitioners face

professional judgment is always necessary

IMPLICATIONS

1. Early/Head Start leaders have a key role to play in collecting, analyzing and applying information to build effective local programs:
 - o **information about the community; individual children's** backgrounds; parental history of education; community goals; etc
2. Early/Head Start leaders have a role to play as local "*action researchers*"
3. Early/Headstart leaders have the responsibility to stay informed about current relevant research and best practices:
 - o discussion/reading groups
 - o invited local experts
 - o electronic network to share expertise

MYTHS

1. Early dual language learning leads to delays, deficits, and confusion
2. Bilingual code-mixing is a sign of confusion
3. Young children are linguistic sponges
4. More exposure to English the better & the earlier the better
5. I only know English – **so I can't support dual language development**

**MYTH 1:
EARLY DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNING RESULTS IN
DELAYS, DEFICITS & CONFUSION**

LA TIMES (OCT, 7, 2002)

**THE EVIDENCE SPEAKS WELL OF BILINGUALISM'S EFFECT ON
KIDS**

Judy Foreman

Lecturer, Harvard Medical School

"Kids who grow up in bilingual homes may be slower to speak than other kids, but once they've learned both languages, they appear to have a number of intellectual advantages"

MYTHS of the MONOLINGUAL BRAIN

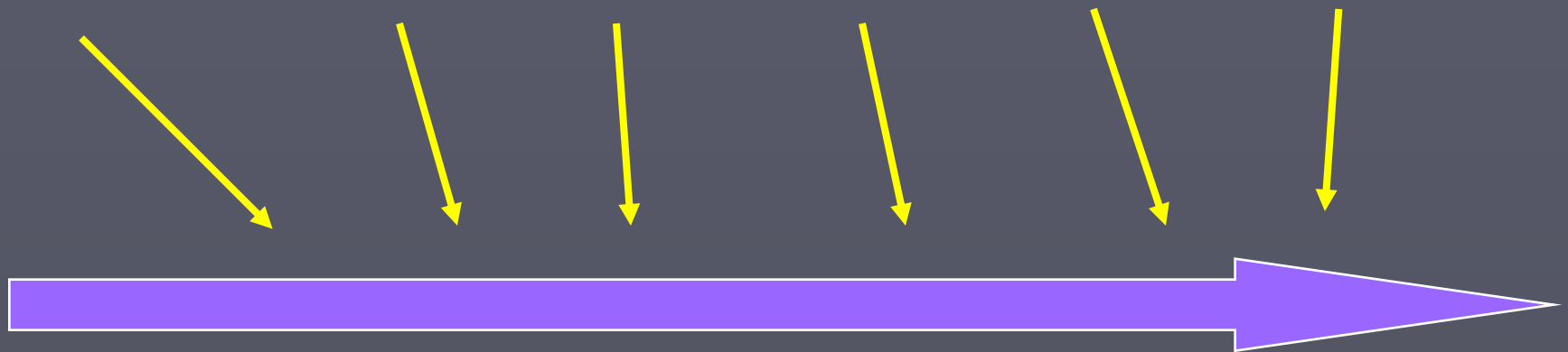
- human brain is monolingual at birth
- it treats input from two languages as one language
 - ⇒ takes children longer to sort out two languages
 - ⇒ acquiring more than one language in infancy or early childhood challenges neuro-cognitive capacity

REALITY

- dual language learning is not a cognitive challenge for most children
- human brain is able to learn two languages as easily as one
- monolingual children get more input than they need to acquire language -- there is room left over
- successful dual language learning depends on the quality of the learning environment --- **more later...**

EVIDENCE: MONOLINGUAL MILESTONES

word segmentation (7 mths)	babbling (10-12 m)	first words (12mths)	vocabulary spurt (18mths)	word comb. (24mths)	grammar/ communicat'n (beyond)
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bilingual milestones are the same

DIFFERENCES ...

- a) **vocabulary** – bilingual children usually have smaller vocabularies in each language in the beginning
 - ▶ but, when conceptual vocabulary in both languages is combined, bilingual children are usually the same as monolinguals
 - ▶ differences are probably due to input – context-dependent nature of word learning

- b) **patterns of use** may reflect community norms – a difference not a deficit

CHILDREN WITH LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT

- ⇒ studies of Spanish-English bilinguals with language impairment in the U.S.* and of French-English bilinguals with language impairment in Canada☼:
- ⇒ bilingual children had impairment in both languages
- ⇒ bilingual children had same kinds of language problems as monolingual children with impairment
- ⇒ bilingual children had same severity of language problems in each language as monolingual children
- ⇒ children with impairment were bilingual

* Gutierrez-Clellen & Wagner (2006)

☼ Paradis, Crago, Genesee, & Rice (2003)

COGNITIVE ADVANTAGES of BILINGUALISM

- ▶ **BIALYSTOK (2004/2007)**
- executive functions of the brain
- focus on relevant task information, screen out irrelevant information
- a result of managing 2 languages
- persists into adulthood

Bilingualism keeps the brain in shape

Two important benefits of French immersion and bilingualism have not received sufficient publicity. The first is based on the work of Ellen Bialystok of York University. She has shown that children who grow up with more than one language develop better problem-solving skills and are better at multi-tasking.

The second advantage has to do with Alzheimer's disease. Dr. Serge Gauthier, director of the Alzheimer Disease Research Unit at the McGill Centre for Studies in Aging, has pointed out that using your brain more could delay the onset and the severity of this disease. Bialystok has shown that slowing down of cognitive processes is not as fast for bilingual people.

The message is clear. Being bilingual might be the best way to keep your brain in tip-top shape.

Barry Welford
LaSalle

Being bilingual boosts brain

Like a daily exercise for your mind

TOM SPEARS
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

OTTAWA — Being bilingual helps keep you from losing your mental edge as you age. Being bilingual is like going to the "brain gym," psychologist Ellen Bialystok of York University says.

Using a language is a big workout for the brain's "executive" area that keeps you navigating through what matters and what not to do.

Two languages is a big workout for the brain's "executive" area that keeps you navigating through what matters and what not to do.

Every time you hear a sentence, there are two possible ways of hearing it. Every time you hear a bilingual sentence, you have to choose very carefully which language to use.

language changes in more than one way.

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IMPLICATIONS

1. expect dual language (DL) learners to be different from monolingual children (because they are bilingual)
2. do not assume that the differences they exhibit are signs of problems
3. enrich the language learning environments of DL learners to minimize differences – DL children need more enrichment, not less
4. promote dual language learning in order to promote the **advantages of bilingualism**

MYTH 2: CODE-MIXING

The Myth

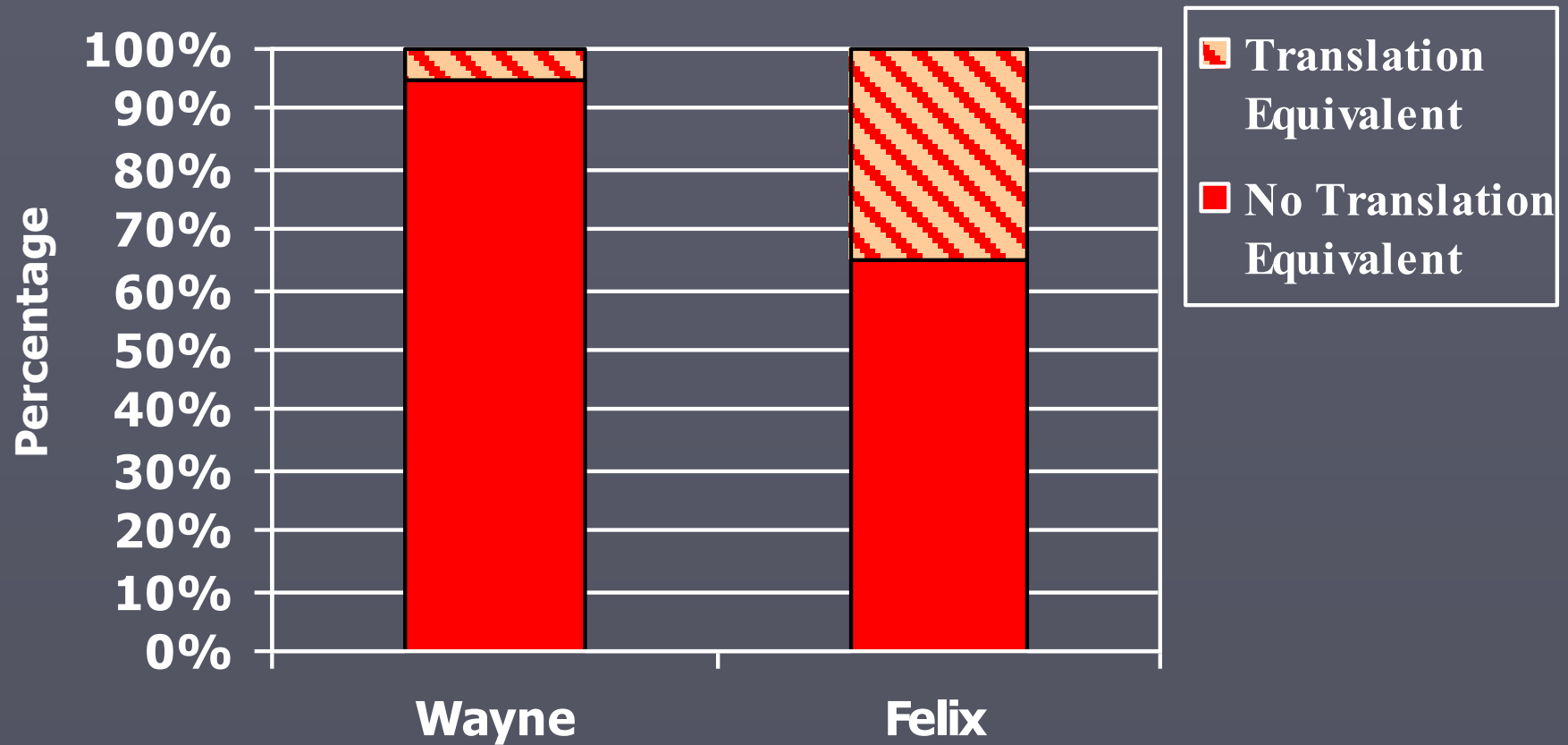
code-mixing is a sign of confusion and lack of mastery of one or both languages

Reality

bilingual code-mixing is a linguistic & communicative resource:

- DL learners use their 2 languages appropriately
- they code-mix to fill gaps in their proficiency
- their code-mixing is grammatical

dual language learners code-mix to fill gaps



Dual language learners code-mix because it is a social norm in their communities

Spanglish, a mixture of Spanish and English, is moving into U.S. mainstream. There are even Hallmark cards in it

El grande switch

DANIEL HERNANDEZ
LOS ANGELES TIMES

LOS ANGELES - On a muggy Sunday afternoon at the Duenas home in near Los Angeles, mariachi music bumped from a boombox on the concrete in the driveway. The roasted smells of "carne asada" lingered over a folding picnic table, like the easy banter between cousins.

"Le robaron la troca con everything. Los tires, los ines," a visiting cousin said.

Translation: "They robbed the truck with everything. The tires, the rims."

"Quiénes watermelón?" of

the 19th century. And for much of that time, it has been dismissed and derided by language purists - "neither good, nor bad, but abominable," as Mexican writer Octavio Paz famously put it.

But the criticism has done little to reduce the prevalence of Spanglish, which today is a bigger part of bilingual life than ever before.

Now, it's rapidly moving from Hispanic neighborhoods into the mainstream. Spanglish is showing up in television and films, with writers using it to bring authenticity to their scripts and get racy language past network executives. Marketers

language purity that remained strong just a generation ago.

Growing up, "I was told in school that you shouldn't mix the languages," said Stavans, whose college plans to hold the first Conference of Spanglish in April. "There used to be this approach that if you use a broken tongue, you have a broken tongue. It's not about broken tongues; it's about different tongues, and they are legitimate. I think you're going to see a lot more of that."

The Hispanic immigrant population is constantly re-

world of his parents and English-language world work and friends.

"I think this Spanglish, ing to go back and forth, it way of saying, 'Look, I can both,' " Duenas said. "Ar think here in Los Ange particularlymente, it's not necessary to speak just Spanish or English. No puedes escribir la vida aqui (you can describe life here) with speaking both."

One form of Spanglish involves making up words - essentially switching languages within a word itself. It can happen when a word phrase is translated literally like "perro caliente" for

"It's a way

Child Bilingual Code-Mixing is Grammatical

e.g. 1: “quiero mas juice” [*I want more juice*] ✓

e.g. 2: “vamos outside” [*let’s go outside*] ✓

e.g. 3: “tengo horsie” [*I have the horsie*] ✓

e.g. 4: “it quiero” [*I want it*] ✗

IMPLICATIONS

1. do not worry if DL learners use both languages at the same time or in the same utterance
2. do not insist that they separate their two languages; they will learn to separate them over time
3. **the one-person/one-language rule**: useful to ensure that children get enough exposure to both languages, but children do not need it to keep their languages separate
4. do not engage in simultaneous translation as a compensatory strategy
5. E/HS personnel can mix too -- to enrich & to provide positive dual language role models

MYTH 3: LINGUISTIC SPONGES

The Myth

children soak up language like a sponge; you just have to talk to them and they learn automatically

Reality

- o Yes and NO

⇒ yes: children are more successful language learners than adults

BUT....

- ★ there are wide (innate) individual differences in rates of language learning – especially second language learning
- ★ language learning takes time
- ★ **child's language competence also depends critically on the quality of the learning environment:**
 - language for social communication
 - language for thinking and literacy

CONVERSATION WITH A 7-YEAR-OLD ELL

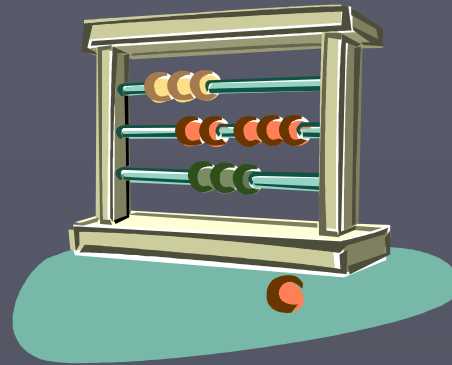
- E: So, what grade are you in, in school?
 - C: two
 - E: Wow! Grade 2. What's your teacher's name?
 - C: Mrs. Munro
 - E: What's the name of your school?
 - C: Lendrum
 - E: I've heard of that school. Do you like school in Canada?
 - C: Yeah, oh yeah
- ⇒ day-to day conversation requires limited vocabulary and grammar skills

ENRICHED LANGUAGE INPUT ⇒ ENRICHED LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

▶ oral language skills in early childhood in **the home language** lay the foundation for later literacy development & academic achievement:

- for example,
 - ★ metalinguistic awareness
 - ★ letter-sound knowledge
 - ★ print-related knowledge – books, reading, writing
 - ★ depth and breadth of vocabulary
 - ★ language for reasoning

IMPLICATIONS: use games to build vocabulary and conceptual skills



using language to build literacy skills

- o read with infants and toddlers
 - o look at picture books together
 - o create a print-rich environment
 - o engage children in rhyming and alliteration through games/songs
 - o **use varied vocabulary to enrich the children's vocabulary**
 - o use language to explain and encourage analytic thinking
- use developmentally-appropriate activities

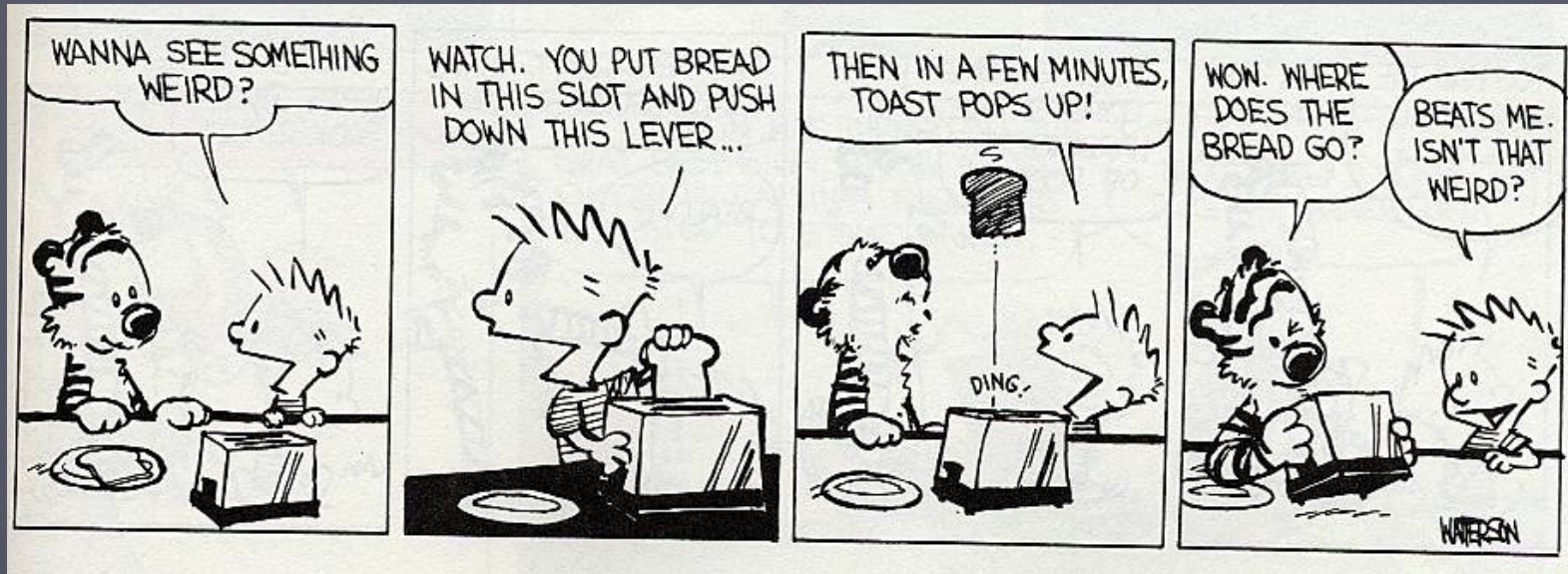


using language to build cognitive abilities

- o to label objects, actions, relationships, concepts:
building conceptual skills
- o to learn numbers: building math readiness
- o to sequence: developing logical thinking
- o to compare: building critical thinking skills:
more than, bigger/smaller than, better than...
- o to explain: building analytic thinking skills
e.g., "*because*"; "*when-then*"; "*if-then*"
- o to predict: building reasoning skills
- o to narrate: building complex language skills – relational
terms -- **then, after, before....**



use everyday experiences to develop language & cognitive skills



implications for parents...

- ★ encourage parents to use the home language to ensure full communication, socialization, strong parenting, and respect for home language and culture
- ★ create activities for parents to use at home so they can **enrich their children's language competence:**
 - book activities (wordless books)
 - audio-cassettes to encourage talk and enriched language use
 - word games in the home language
 - rhymes & songs
- ★ parent workshops on how to enrich language use at home



MYTH 4: MORE & EARLIER IS BETTER

The Myth

- ★ the more exposure to English, the greater the competence
- ★ the earlier the exposure to English, the better
- ★ minority language children should learn English ASAP

Reality

- time does not matter much for English
- time does matter for minority languages

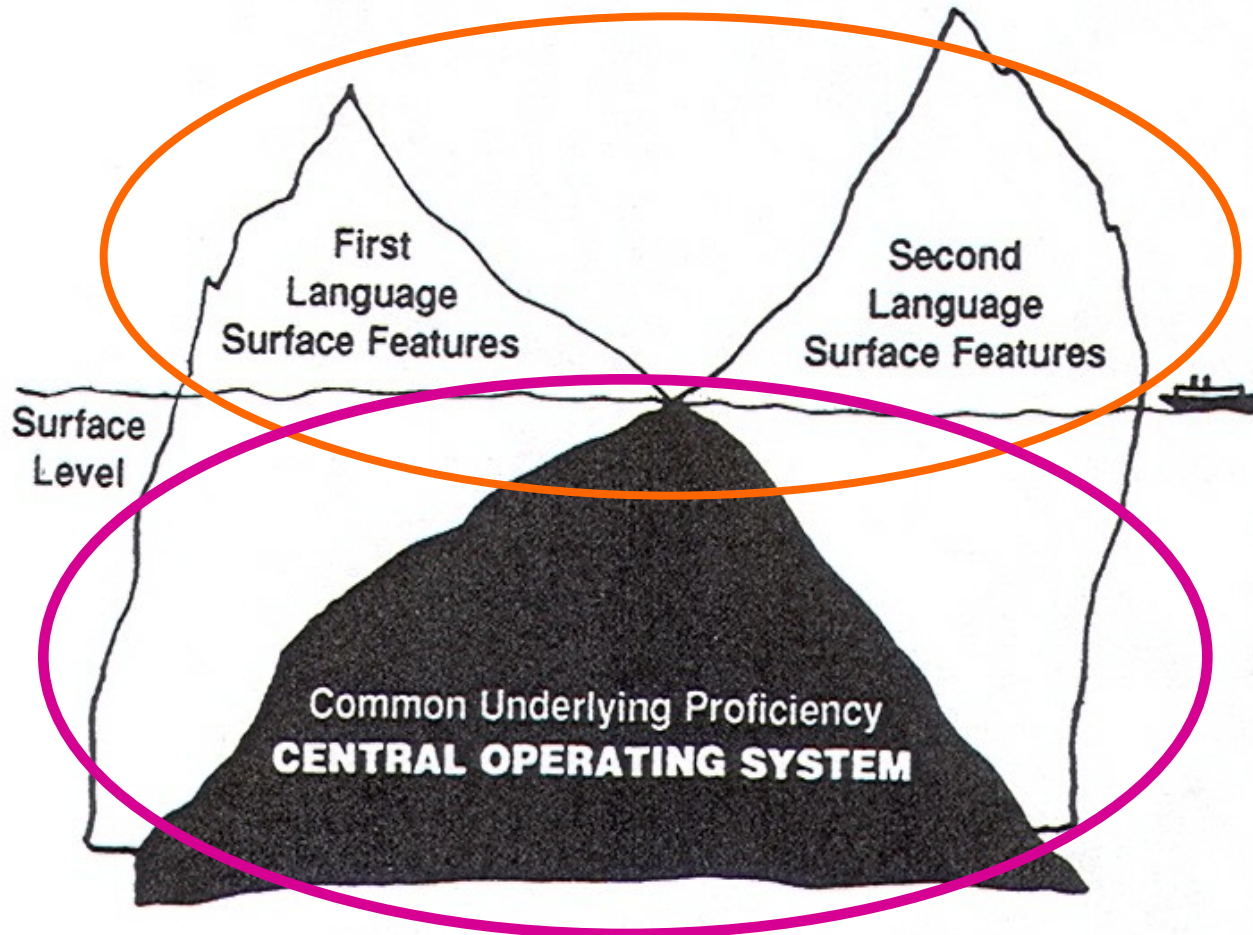
WHY?

HOME LANGUAGE FACILITATES ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ strong HOME language skills facilitate the acquisition of English – **BOOTSTRAPPING**
- ▶ cross-linguistic facilitation is strongest in areas related to literacy and academic performance – using language to **read, think critically, and problem solve, tell stories....**
- ▶ cross-linguistic facilitation starts in the pre-school years

COMMON UNDERLYING PROFICIENCY

(from Cummins, 2000)





ACADEMIC ADVANTAGES of BILINGUALISM

Bilingual students in K-12 school programs:

- ▶ are more likely to close the achievement gap with English-L1 students
- ▶ have higher grades, lower transiency rates, and are more likely to be on track with high school credits than ELLs with lower levels of L1 proficiency
- ▶ have higher levels of achievement in English reading and math than students with low levels of bilingual proficiency

IMPLICATIONS

- ⇒ support development of child's home language
- ⇒ encourage parents to use home language
- ⇒ provide parents & other volunteers with guidance on how to enrich their use of the home language

CREATE AN ADDITIVE DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

additive view of bilingualism

Mi Nanny, Mi Teacher

Immigrant Care Givers Double as Language Instructors

NAVARRO

When he first spoke, he said “y” and “vacuum,” his daddy’s most wanted words. The fascination of his fascinating cleaner. Words also included “bonito” (pretty), the Salvadoran nanny’s side since he was a

na López, does not know his parents are not at the tender age of person in the household to communicate as with many other New York City and other immigrant populations. Daniel’s case not only teaches after him but language instructor.

and for nanny services over the last decade that new immigrants work have combined de facto language of English-speaking trend, along with these immigrant par-



subtractive view of bilingualism

Hispanics threaten U.S. melting pot

Immigrants must learn
English or country will
suffer in long run



Since the United States established itself as an English-speaking country, never has an immigrant group so threatened the “melting pot” concept.

In his book *Empires of the Word*, Nicholas Ostler argues English became the dominant language of the United States in large part because English-speaking colonists were far more likely to arrive in families than colonists from other parts of Europe.

Consequently, their numbers grew more rapidly than, say, those of the French, whose fur-trading *coureurs de*

additive bilingual environment is critical

★ social psychological reasons:

cultural double bind

Native American language/cultural preservation & revitalization

★ psycholinguistic reasons:

cross-language facilitation

★ “educational” reasons:

a matter of expectations

MYTH 5:
***"I ONLY KNOW ENGLISH,
SO I CAN'T SUPPORT DUAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT"***

NONSENSE!

There's lots you can do....

creating a positive learning environment for dual language learners

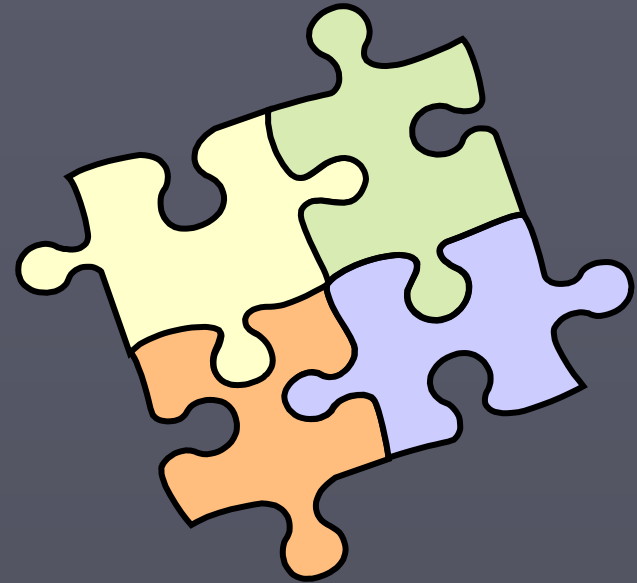
Suggestions for supporting home language development:

- ★ Promote an attitude of **additive bilingualism**
- ★ Provide key services in main home languages when working with parents
- ★ Encourage parents to use home language and provide guidance on how to enrich home language – enlist community volunteers to do this
- ★ Call on older children to serve as bilingual experts – bilingual models
- ★ Learn and use a few salient words in most common home languages – child-friendly words and expressions
- ★ Include parents and volunteers who speak home languages to participate — provide training
- ★ Enlist community groups that offer services in other languages

A PLAN

▶ to create an additive dual language environment, you need a plan:

- when?
- who?
- what?
- developmental issues

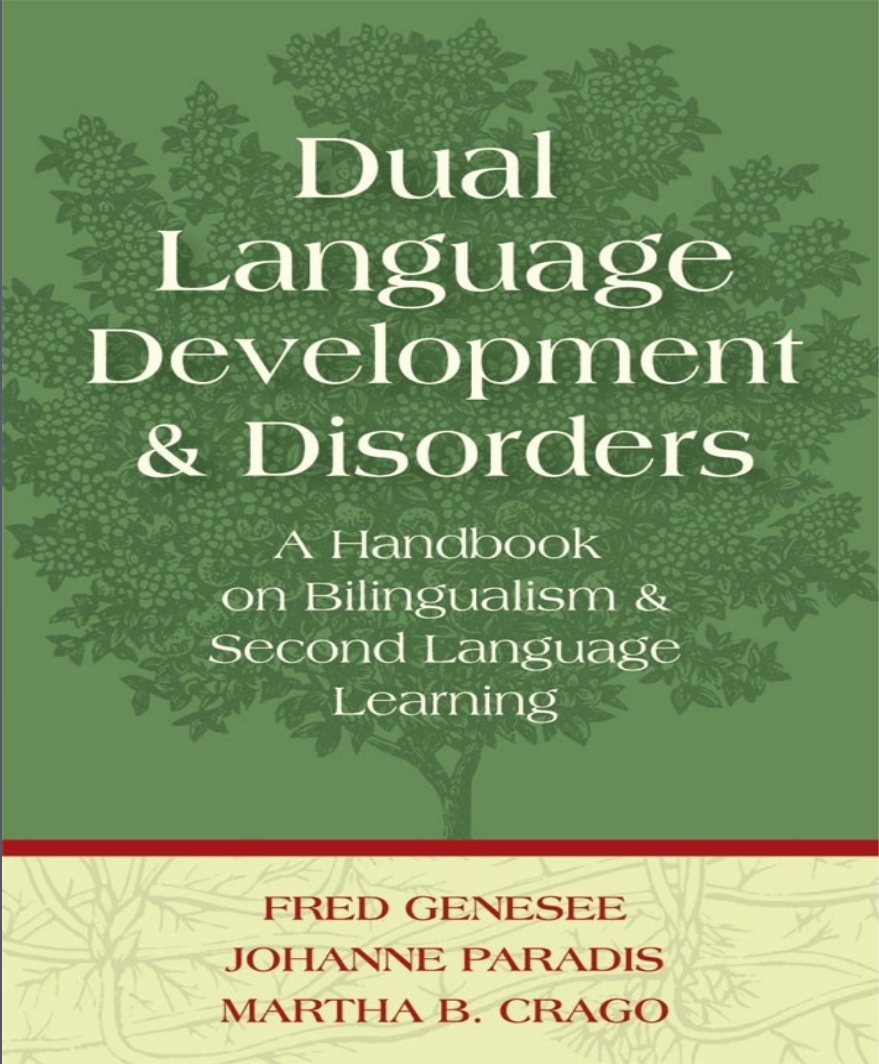


KIDS CAN DO IT!

CAN WE?

Additional Readings

- ▶ Genesee, F., Paradis, J., & Crago, M. (2004)
Dual Language Development and Disorders: A Handbook on Bilingualism and Second Language Acquisition.
Brookes Publishing.
- ▶ Patton-Tabors, P. (2008)
One Language – One Parent: A Guide for Preschool Educators of Children Learning English as a Second Language. Brookes Publishing.



Dual Language Development & Disorders

A Handbook
on Bilingualism &
Second Language
Learning

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