

Navigating a Multilingual Environment




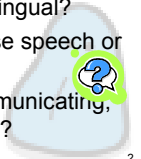
Lucero Vargas-Almeida, R.SLP. and Maritza Cajigas-Diaz, MS, CCC- S-LP (C) combine professional expertise as consultants in second language development and assessment with practical experience supporting multilingual families and professionals.



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The confusion...

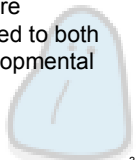
- Will having two or more languages be confusing for my child?
- When is the best time to start my child learning another language?
- How do you maintain the home language amidst the influence of the majority language?
- How do I teach my child to be bilingual?
- Will learning two languages cause speech or language problems?
- If my child is having trouble communicating, should we use only one language?

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The confusion...

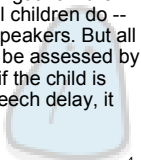
Immigrant parents whom English is a second language have been told not to speak their native language with their children, to avoid confusion between languages, difficulties with learning both, and slow integration into the mainstream English speaking community. It is more beneficial for the children to be exposed to both languages, even if the child has developmental delays.



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The confusion...


It used to be suggested that bilingual children were a little slower learning to speak than monolingual children, this is no longer an accepted view, the difference would be very small. A bilingual child whose speech is delayed (for example, if they have not said the first word by 18 months) should be treated exactly like a monolingual child. It is dangerous to think that the child's speech is delayed because the child is bilingual. Bilingual children vary from one another just as monolingual children do -- some will be early and some will be late speakers. But all children whose speech is delayed should be assessed by a speech-language pathologist, because if the child is deaf, or if there is some reason for the speech delay, it should be dealt with.



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The confusion...


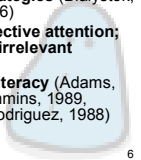
- It is not evidence that bilingualism confuses a child or produces language delays. *Raising Multilingual Children: Foreign Language Acquisition and Children*, by Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa. *The Care and Education of Young Bilinguals: An Introduction for Professionals*, by Colin Baker and Anne Sienkewicz.



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Bilingualism Advantages



1. **Has a positive effect on intellectual growth and enriches and enhances a child's mental development** (Baker & Hornberger, 2001; Bialystok, 1991; Chipongian, 2000; Diaz & Klinger, 1991; Hakuta 1986)
2. **Gives children greater sensitivity to language and a better ear for listening. Improves a child's understanding of his/her native language** (Bosch & Sebastian-Galles, 2001; Burns, Yoshida, Hill & Werker, 2007;)
3. **Gives children more cognitive strategies and more flexibility in their use of these strategies** (Bialystok, 2001, Cummins, 1976, Hakuta, 1986)
4. **Helps children to have better selective attention; that is, enables them to filter out irrelevant information** (Bialystok, 2001)
5. **Correlates with later success in literacy** (Adams, 1990; Collier & Thomas, 1992; Cummins, 1989, Escamilla, 2000; Modiano, 1968, Rodriguez, 1988)

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Advantages

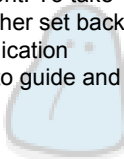
6. Gives children the ability to communicate with people they would otherwise not have the chance to know (Weatherford, 1986), which may include their own family members
7. When the child's home language is different from the majority language, facilitates a positive cultural identity (Baez, 2002; Sterling, 2000, Zentella, 1997))
8. Opens the door to other cultures and helps a child understand and appreciate people from other countries (Baker 2001)
9. Gives a student a head start in language requirements for college (Weatherford, 1986)
10. Increases job opportunities in many careers where knowing another language is a real asset. (Weatherford, 1986)


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Navigating the Barriers of Multilingualism...



- There is no written blueprint to support a child with development delays, each case is different and should be treated as such. The first language that the child was exposed to acts as a foundation to any further development. To take the foundation away may cause further set back in the development of their communication skills. There are general strategies to guide and assist the child's development:



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common underlying ability

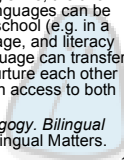
Baker, C. (2000). *A parents' and teachers' guide to bilingualism*. 2nd Edition. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

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"The level of development of children's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development.

Children who come to school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language. When parents and other caregivers (e.g. grandparents) are able to spend time with their children and tell stories or discuss issues with them in a way that develops their mother tongue vocabulary and concepts, children come to school well-prepared to learn the school language and succeed educationally. Children's knowledge and skills transfer across languages from the mother tongue they have learned in the home to the school language. From the point of view of children's development of concepts and thinking skills, the two languages are interdependent. Transfer across languages can be two-way: when the mother tongue is promoted in school (e.g. in a bilingual education program), the concepts, language, and literacy skills that children are learning in the majority language can transfer to the home language. In short, both languages nurture each other when the educational environment permits children access to both languages."

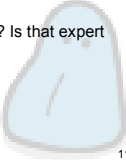
•Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power, and pedagogy. Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.



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Some important issues to think about bilingualism and children with special needs or language delays:



- If a child has a developmental issue like Autism or Down's syndrome, the proficiency may be affected, but stopping multilingual upbringing is not always necessary. Each case is highly individual; it is not a "recipe" so consult a specialist to assess the child's particular condition. There are some general considerations such as:
- Exactly how does this situation impact the child's speech development?
- How severe is it?
- What is your goal with multilingualism?
- What is the recommendation from a clinical expert? Is that expert experienced with multilingualism?
- What is the family situation?



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Bilingual Children with LD

- bilingual children regularly function in environments in which two different languages are used. In order to be successful in these environments, both languages are needed.
- the overall purpose of intervention for the bilingual child with LD must be to affect positive change in their ability to communicate in both/all languages used in their home and community.

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Recommendations

Case story

"Guillermo ("Memo") is a 4th grader in an all English school. His parents speak primarily Spanish but attend English as a second language classes Thursday evenings offered through the Adult Community Center affiliated with Memo's school. Memo's older brother speaks Spanish as well as English and is in the 6th grade in the same school as Memo. Parents noted that Memo has stopped speaking Spanish at home; when spoken to by his immediate or extended family members in Spanish, he responds in English. His parents are not able to judge Memo's abilities in English or to assist him with homework.

Assessment results revealed delayed attainment of early language milestones in Spanish (L1) with persistent delays in L2 relative to other English language learners. He is currently performing well-below grade expectations in reading and math (other subjects are not graded at this level). Dynamic assessment and in-class response to intervention methods indicated that Memo performed better when the pace of interaction was slowed and auditory distractions were reduced. Direct language testing indicated delays/deficits in comprehension and production in Spanish and English."

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Recommendations

Case story

"English performance was stronger than Spanish on most direct assessment measures, though still significantly below peers with similar language-learning experiences. Also, within this overall low but with relative cross-linguistic strength in English, there was clear evidence of distributed skills in that some concepts could be identified in Spanish but not English and others could be identified in English but not Spanish. Observations, testing, and teacher report indicated areas of greatest current weakness in vocabulary (both breadth and efficient access), perception and production of grammatical inflections, and processing of spoken language particularly for academic tasks in the classroom setting.

The SLP at Memo's school does not speak Spanish; a bilingual professional is available to assist with planning and evaluating program effectiveness but not for providing direct on-going treatment. The immediate action plan for Memo developed and implemented by the SLP for the final three months of the school year includes the following advocacy, indirect, and direct instructional activities:"

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Recommendations

- "In collaboration with the school audiologist, advocate for the purchase and installation of a sound field system in Memo's primary classroom to increase acoustic saliency of teacher talk during instructional times. The following materials are used to support this request: Boswell, 2006; Janiga, 2006; Nelson, Soli, & Seltz, 2002; and Seep, Glosemeyer, Hulce, Linn, and Aytar, 2000. The goal in using this sound field system is to increase Memo's ability to participate in key instructional activities in English. Research showing that this relatively inexpensive system will also benefit other children in the classroom will be highlighted in discussions with administration and classroom teacher."
- "To increase his ability to stay on-task during instructional activities, Memo is paired with a peer (Luis) who is encouraged to help Memo find the right page and numbered exercises during reading and math. Luis and Memo are partners during "in-seat" assignment work. Peer-mediated learning strategies based on Memo's responses to previously implemented in-class intervention activities are used as the basis for this mediation."

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Recommendations

- "The clinician collaborates with the classroom teacher to preview vocabulary that will be used in future language arts, math, and science classes. During these English sessions, the SLP facilitates context-embedded understanding of words through a variety of strategies including semantic webs, comparison charts, Venn diagrams, and creative visualization techniques (e.g., Marzano, Norford, Paynter, Pickering, & Gaddy, 2001)."
- "Vocabulary items used in direct treatment sessions in English are sent home for translation practice for Memo and his parents (who are also working to learn English). To complete the translation of target words, the use of any and all resources is encouraged, including dictionaries, the internet, or bilingual individuals."

Vocabulary   

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Recommendations

Case story

- "During direct treatment sessions with Memo, the clinician uses minimal pair sentences in English to train attention to slight differences in sound that signal important differences in meaning. Initially, simple sentences with minimally different familiar content words in sentence-final position are used for training. For example, borrowing sets of minimal pair cards typically used in phonological intervention, sentences are constructed to which Memo responds by providing the indicated picture card ("Please give me the bow" vs. "Please give me the boat"). Gradually the difficulty of these minimally different sentences is increased to incorporate target morphological inflections at different places in the sentences (*The girl eats pizza* vs. *The girls eat pizza*)."

Language Disorders in Bilingual Children and Adults (Kohnert, 2007).

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Web Resources

- http://programs.epsb.ca/images/stories/assessments_in_school_-_information_for_newcomer_parents_and_community_workers_june_29.pdf
- www.bilingualfamilynewsletter.com
- www.cal.org/ericcl
- <http://www.nethelp.no/cindy/resources.html>
- <http://www.betterchinese.com/>
- <http://www.mantralingua.com/>
- <http://www.languagelizard.com/newsletterthankyou.htm>
- <http://www.master-comm.com/products.html>
- http://www.bilingualwiki.com/index.php?title=Cognitive_Flexibility
- <http://content.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3499>
- <http://www.wor.com/shopping/products.asp?id=237>
- <http://www.nethelp.no/cindy/myth.html>

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