

How & Why To Raise Your Child Bilingually

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Bilingualism



- The ability to understand and/or speak more than one language
 - Definitions vary
- Mixed perspectives on benefits in US culture
 - Positive Attitudes
 - Useful for travel and business
 - Negative Attitudes
 - Will it confuse a child?
 - Immigrants often discouraged from using home language
- Let's discuss how and why it's great to be bilingual...

What is Speech Versus Language?

• SPEECH

- The **oral-verbal** means of communicating.

- Areas of Speech include:

- Articulation: How speech sounds are made

- e.g., children must learn how to produce the “s” sound in order to say “sun” instead of “tun”

- Voice: Breathing causes the vocal folds to vibrate and produce sound

- e.g., overuse or misuse and can lead to hoarseness, laryngitis, nodules, etc.

- Fluency: The rhythm of speech

- e.g., sound and word repetitions and hesitations disrupt fluency

- Excessive repetitions/hesitations may indicate stuttering



What is Speech Versus Language?



LANGUAGE: A system of shared rules

- Language is receptive or expressive
- Language is oral, written, or gestural
- The 5 components of language include:
 - **Phonology**: Rules of **sound** combination to create words
 - [s], [i], [t] = Seat
 - **Morphology**: Rules that govern **meaningful sound units**
 - “-ed” to mark past tense

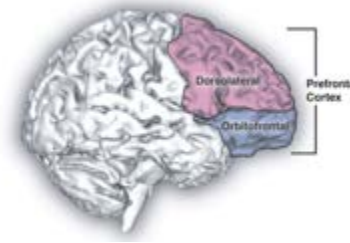
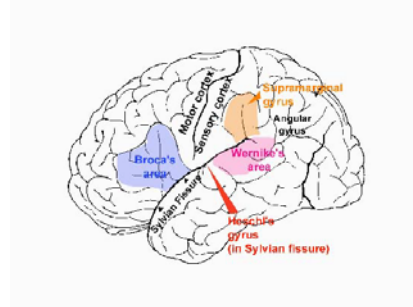


What is Speech Versus Language?



- Other components of language include:
 - **Semantics**: Regards **meaning** in words, sentences, paragraphs, conversations, etc.
 - “course ” can be a **pathway** or a **class** you take
 - “sock” and “hat” = related semantically = things you wear
 - **Syntax**: Rules that govern **how words are combined** to make phrases and sentences
 - **Determiner + Subject + Verb + Determiner + Object** →
“The dog ate the bone.”
 - **Pragmatics**: Rules that govern **language use**
 - **eye contact** duration, **standing distance** from another speaker, **turn taking**, etc.

Language & Related Functions



- Language functions via non-verbal cognitive processes (a.k.a., Executive Functions)
 - planning, working memory, attention, problem solving, verbal reasoning, inhibition, mental flexibility, multi-tasking, initiation, and action monitoring
- Language (verbal cognition) and non-verbal cognition are inextricably linked

Bilingualism and Cognitive Development

Benefits of Bilingualism

Social benefits are often clear

- Travel
- Social relationships
- Art Appreciation
- International Business
- Education
- Literature



Bilingualism and Cognitive Development

Faux-Negative Consequences

(Why the Negative Myths?)

- Normal second language errors are mistook as language problems
 - Silent period
 - Telegraphic output in new language
 - Mixing languages within an utterance
 - Interference (using grammar system of Language A with the vocabulary of Language B)
 - “I have hunger” for “I am hungry” following the structure of Spanish when speaking English
 - Language Loss: Loss of native language skills if not maintained
- Seemingly slower vocabulary acquisition within a given language, but not overall
 - Need to look at whole child, not as two monolinguals in one body
 - Monolingual Child 100 words in English
 - Bilingual Child 75 Words in English, 25 in Spanish. Still has a 100 word vocabulary

Bilingualism and Cognitive Development

Faux-Negative Consequences

- Why bilingual children are often misidentified?
 - Many providers (e.g., school districts, agencies) lack the financial, material and knowledge resources to assess bilingual children appropriately
 - Minority language children learning English are often thrown in to “sink or swim” situations in school which can undermine academic success
 - Minority language children learning English are transferred out of bilingual education based on their basic communication skills with a language and before they have the cognitive-academic skills in English to thrive in a school setting
- Consequences of Misidentification
 - Over-identification: Child’s cognitive-linguistic system **is not impaired**. Normal second language development errors as seen as disordered.
 - Under-identification: Child’s cognitive-linguistic system **is impaired**. Assessment in non-dominant language only could lead to conclusion difficulties are second to learning a new language
- What to do? Educate yourself and others

Bilingualism and Cognitive Development

Benefits of Bilingualism

- Cognitive benefits are often less clear but are significant
- Research suggests that bilingual children have increased cognitive skills especially in regard to how they think about cognitive strategies and the flexibility of their cognitive skill. (Faroqi-Shah, 2009)
 - Relative to monolinguals bilingual children evidence
 - better perceptual skills (e.g., find something in the background)
 - better classification skills
 - earlier understanding of symbolism (e.g., that words are symbols for objects, concepts, feelings and that these tokens can have multiple names).

Bilingualism and Cognitive Development

Positive Consequences

- The Center for Applied Linguistics Reports
 - Students with 4 or more years of foreign language study score higher in math and verbal sections of the SAT than students who do not (The College Board SAT, 2003)
 - Bilingualism is related to better problem solving skills (Bamford & Mizokawa, 1991)
 - Knowledge of foreign languages facilitates knowledge of native language structure and vocabulary (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004)

Bilingualism and Cognitive Development

Positive Consequences

- Bilinguals can manage (inhibit) irrelevant information better than monolinguals (Bialystok, Craik, Klein, and Viswanathan, 2004)
- Inhibition is linked to a number of disorders so bilingualism could be clinically relevant for people with
 - Attention deficits, frontal lobe impairments
- Research shows that *Alzheimer's Dementia* can be delayed in bilinguals up to four years relative to monolinguals (Bialystok, Craik, and Freedman, 2007)
- Research with adults suggests that bilingualism facilitates word learning (Papagano and Vallar, 1995)

When to Start a Second Language

- Any time is a fine time to start, BUT sooner is better than later
- Research shows that there are sensitive periods for developing cognitive skills
 - That is, gross age ranges when skills need to/should start developing
- Many researchers find that starting a second language before puberty is best.
- BICS & CALPS (see Jim Cummins)
 - Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills can take 3 to 5 years to master
 - Cognitive Academic Language Skills can take 5 to 7 years to master

What Facilitates Bilingualism? (Kohnert, 2008)

- Means
 - Physical, intellectual, social-emotional, emotional abilities
- Opportunity
 - Availability of environments to communicate
 - Functions: Spoken, written, gestured, formal/informal, personal, educational, vocational
 - Environments: Home, school, work, playground, community centers, world wide web
 - **Language skill increases with increased numbers of meaningful interactions and decreases as interactions are limited or not meaningful**
- Motive
 - Language is a tool to meet wants and needs

Ways to Become Bilingual

- Home
 - One parent one language
 - Situational
 - Language A at home, language B at school
 - Select a given language for a given activity
 - Read books
 - Take trips/Home Exchange
 - Audio & Video Tapes
 - Though research shows this is not as beneficial as live language interactions
 - Internet resources
 - Hire a baby sitter who speaks that language
- Outside the Home
 - Immersion Programs: All or part of the day is taught in the target language
 - Exploratory Programs: Language taught as a elective class that meets periodically (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly)

Thank You

What are your questions?

