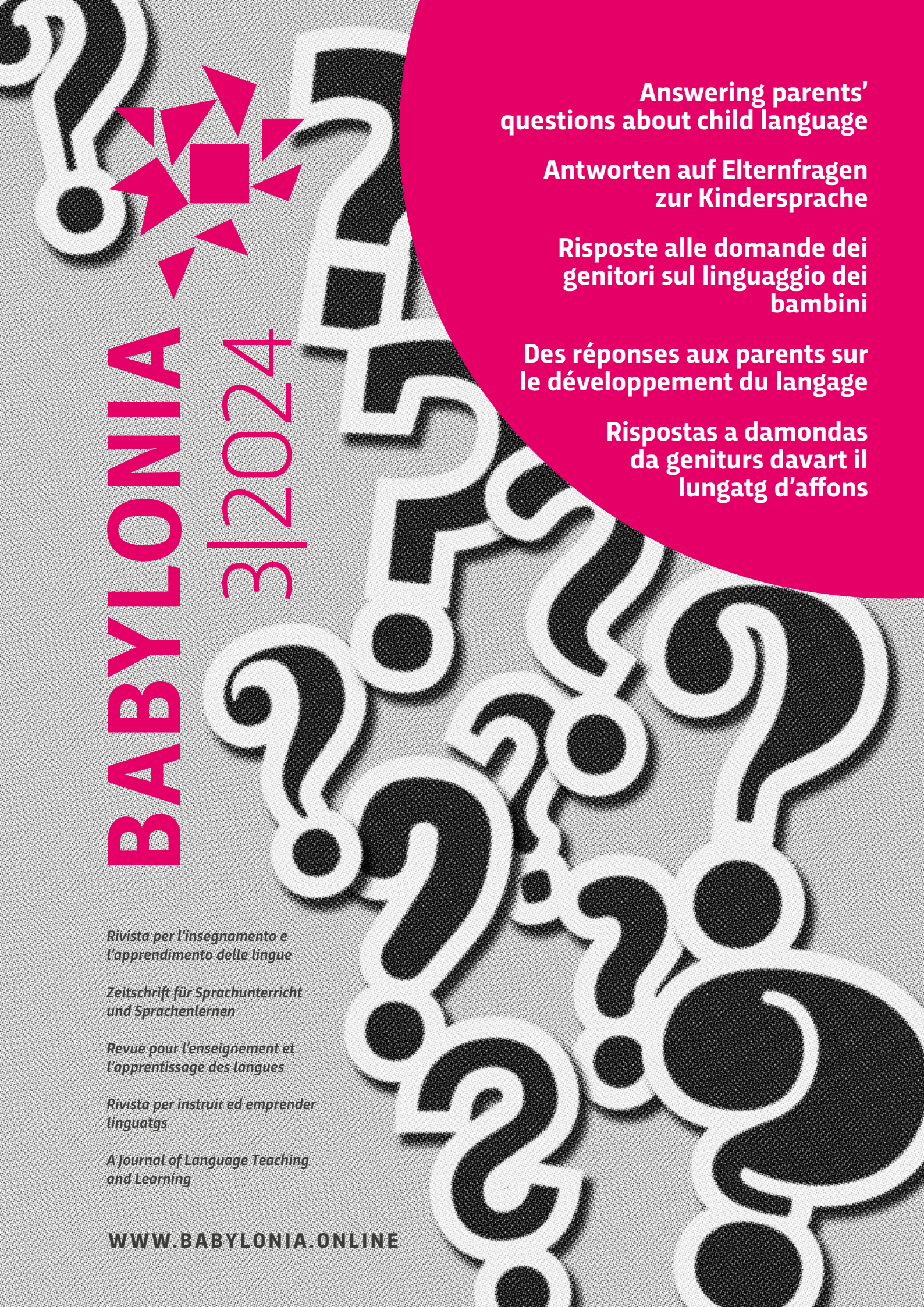

BABYLONIA 3|2024

Answering parents' questions about child language

Antworten auf Elternfragen zur Kindersprache

Risposte alle domande dei genitori sul linguaggio dei bambini

Des réponses aux parents sur le développement du langage

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Zeitschrift für Sprachunterricht und Sprachenlernen

Revue pour l'enseignement et l'apprentissage des langues

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A Journal of Language Teaching and Learning

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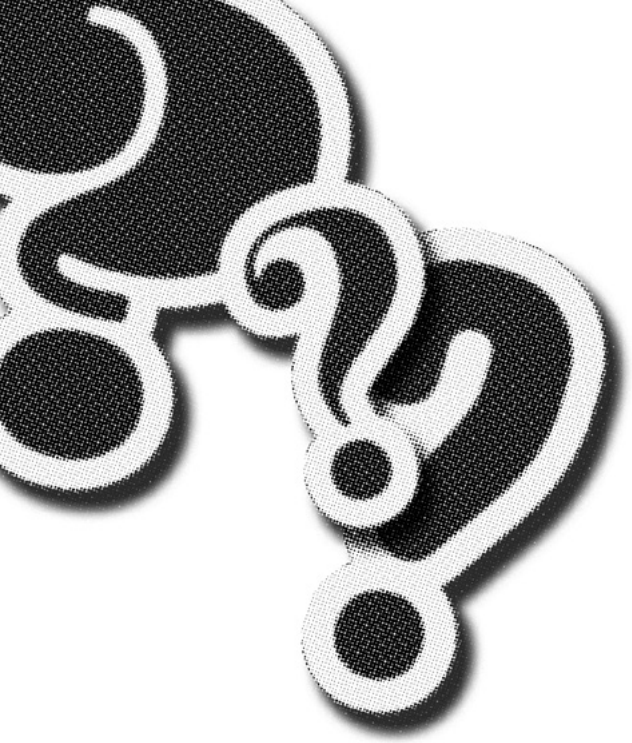

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Editrices:
Annick de Houwer, Anna Ghimenton & Amelia Lambelet

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Tema

BABYLONIA

3|2024

Il racconto

Editoriale

Une récente étude impliquant de nombreux laboratoires de recherche à travers le monde s'est intéressée à la confiance accordée aux scientifiques par les populations civiles. Les résultats montrent d'une part que, contrairement aux idées reçues, la confiance envers la communauté scientifique ne s'est pas érodée à l'échelle globale, mais aussi qu'une grande majorité des plus de 70 000 répondants estiment que les scientifiques ont le devoir de (mieux) communiquer leurs résultats avec le grand public.

Comme le dit l'étude : « Public perception of scientific integrity—one of four components of trust—is high, but perceptions of scientists' openness are comparably lower. Therefore, scientists wishing to gain more public trust could work on being more receptive to feedback, more transparent about their funding and data sources, and invest more effort into communicating about science with the public—which we found to be desired by 83% of respondents » (p. 16)

La question qui se pose est donc de savoir comment être plus transparents, plus réceptifs aux feedbacks, et de meilleurs communicateurs. Nous avons interrogé à cet effet non pas un chercheur, mais…un bot. Celui du Dr. Niels G. Mede, le chercheur suisse engagé dans le projet. Sa réponse, que vous trouverez ici, nous encourage dans la direction prise par Babylonia. En particulier, les conseils de « mettre l'accent sur des sujets qui correspondent aux intérêts et aux préoccupations du public* » et « de reconnaître et de valider les idées et les besoins du public afin d'éviter de susciter du ressentiment, en particulier chez les sceptiques* » sont très proches de notre intention avec ce numéro de Babylonia, pour lequel nous sommes partis des questions et préoccupations de *vrais* parents pour les poser à des chercheurs et chercheuses reconnues.

En nous rendant bien compte que, pour cet éditorial, nous avons été chercher les résultats scientifiques qui servaient le plus nos intérêts (la plus commune des fallacies !), nous vous souhaitons une excellente lecture - et nous réjouissons par avance de vos feedbacks et questions complémentaires !

BA

* notre traduction

Un recente studio, che ha coinvolto numerosi laboratori di ricerca in tutto il mondo, ha analizzato la fiducia riposta dalla società civile negli scienziati e nelle scienziate. Da una parte i risultati mostrano che, contrariamente a quanto si crede, la fiducia nella comunità scientifica non si è erosa su scala globale, ma dall'altra parte, un'ampia maggioranza delle oltre 70.000 persone intervistate ritiene che la scienza abbia il dovere di comunicare (meglio) le sue scoperte al grande pubblico.

Come si legge nello studio: "Public perception of scientific integrity— one of four components of trust — is high, but perceptions of scientists' openness are comparably lower. Therefore, scientists wishing to gain more public trust could work on being more receptive to feedback, more transparent about their funding and data sources, and invest more effort into communicating about science with the public—which we found to be desired by 83% of respondents" (p. 16).

Quindi la domanda è: come possiamo essere più trasparenti, più ricettivi ai feedback, come comunicare meglio? A tal fine, abbiamo intervistato non un ricercatore, ma… un bot. Si tratta di Niels G. Mede, il ricercatore svizzero coinvolto nel progetto. La sua risposta, che potete trovare qui, ci incoraggia nella direzione intrapresa da Babylonia. In particolare, i consigli di "concentrarsi su argomenti che corrispondono agli interessi e alle preoccupazioni del pubblico*" e di "riconoscere e convalidare le idee e le esigenze del pubblico per evitare di suscitare risentimento, in particolare tra le persone scettiche*" sono molto vicini alle intenzioni di questo numero di Babylonia, per il quale siamo partite dalle domande e dalle preoccupazioni di genitori reali e le abbiamo sottoposte a ricercatori e ricercatrici riconosciute.

Consapevoli che, per questo editoriale, abbiamo cercato i risultati scientifici che meglio rispondevano ai nostri interessi (la più comune delle fallacie!), vi auguriamo un'ottima lettura - e attendiamo i vostri commenti e le vostre ulteriori domande!

BY

* la nostra traduzione

In einer kürzlich veröffentlichten Studie, an der zahlreiche Forschungsgruppen auf der ganzen Welt beteiligt waren, wurde das Vertrauen untersucht, das die Zivilbevölkerung den Wissenschaftler:innen entgegenbringt. Die Resultate zeigen einerseits, dass das Vertrauen in die Wissenschaftsgemeinschaft im Gegensatz zur landläufigen Meinung weltweit nicht geschwunden ist, andererseits aber auch, dass eine grosse Mehrheit der mehr als 70 000 Befragten der Meinung ist, dass Wissenschaftler:innen ihre Ergebnisse der breiten Öffentlichkeit (besser) kommunizieren müssen.

Wie es in der Studie heisst: „Public perception of scientific integrity—one of four components of trust—is high, but perceptions of scientists' openess are comparably lower. Therefore, scientists wishing to gain more public trust could work on being more receptive to feedback, more transparent about their funding and data sources, and invest more effort into communicating about science with the public—which we found to be desired by 83% of respondents" (p. 16)

Die Frage ist also, wie wir transparenter sowie offener für Feedback sein und besser kommunizieren können. Wir haben dazu keine Forscher:in befragt, sondern...einen Bot, denjenigen von Dr. Niels G. Mede, dem Schweizer Forscher, der an dem Projekt beteiligt war. Seine Antwort, die Sie hier finden, ermutigt uns, die von Babylonia eingeschlagene Richtung beizubehalten. Insbesondere der Ratschlag, „sich auf Themen zu konzentrieren, die den Interessen und Anliegen der Öffentlichkeit entsprechen*" und „die Ideen und Bedürfnisse der Öffentlichkeit anzuerkennen und zu validieren, um Ressentiments, insbesondere bei Skeptiker:innen, zu vermeiden*" kommt der Absicht dieser Babylonia-Ausgabe sehr nahe, in der wir von den Fragen und Sorgen „echter" Eltern ausgegangen sind, um uns dann an anerkannte Wissenschaftler:innen zu wenden.

Auch wenn wir uns bewusst sind, dass wir für dieses Editorial die wissenschaftlichen Ergebnisse gesucht haben, die unseren Interessen am meisten dienlich sind (der häufigste Fehlschluss!), wünschen wir Ihnen eine gute Lektüre - und freuen uns auf Ihr Feedback und weitere Fragen!

LO

*unsere Übersetzung

En in studi publicau dacuort ei vegnida examinada la fidonza che la populaziun civila ha enviers ils scienziai e la scienziadas. Numerus labors da perscrutaziun digl entir mund ein separticipai vid il studi. Ils resultats muossan d'ina vart che la confidonza en la cuminonza scientifica ei – encunter l'opiniun generala – buc tschessada mundialmein. Da l'autra vart ei ina gronda maioritad dallas varga 70 000 persunas questiunadas dil meini ch'ils scienziai e las scienziadas stoppien communicar (meglier) lur resultats alla vasta publicitad.

Sco ch'ei ha num el studi: "Public perception of scientific integrity—one of four components of trust—is high, but perceptions of scientists' openess are comparably lower. Therefore, scientists wishing to gain more public trust could work on being more receptive to feedback, more transparent about their funding and data sources, and invest more effort into communicating about science with the public—which we found to be desired by 83% of respondents" (p. 16)

La damonda ei pia co nus savein communicar meglier ed esser pli transparents ed aviarts per feedback. Nus havein buc dumandau in perscrutader, mobein... in "bot", quel da Dr. Niels G. Mede, il perscrutader svizzer ch'era involvaus el project. Sia risposta ch'ins anfla cheu encurascha dad ir vinavon ella direcziun che Babylonia propona. Cunzun ils cussegls da "s'orientar vida temas che correspundan als interess ed als giavischs dalla publicitad*" e da "renconuscher e confirmar las ideas ed ils basegns dalla publicitad per evitar resentiments, cunzun tier scepticists e scepticistas*" ein fetg datier da nies intent da questa ediziun da Babylonia. Nus essan parti dallas damondas e dils quitaus da *vers* geniturs ed havein lu consultau scienziai renomai e scienziadas renomadas.

Era sche nus essan cunscients che nus havein encuretg per quest editorial ils resultats scientifics che surveschan a nos interess (la conclusiun sbagliada che vegn avon il pli savens!), giavischein nus a Vus ina buna lectura – e selegrein sin Vies feedback e sin ulteriuras damondas!

NIA

*nossa traducziun

Introduzione

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND PARENTAL CONCERNS ON CHILDREN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Annick De Houwer | Harmonious Bilingualism Network (HaBilNet)
Anna Ghimenton | Université Grenoble Alpes
Amelia Lambelet | University of Teacher Training and Education, State of Vaud (HEP Vaud)

Since its founding in 1991, Babylonia has aimed to bridge the gap between scientific research and language education practice. Most of our issues have been addressed to language teachers and teacher trainers. With this special issue, we want to widen our mission and provide accessible, evidence-based answers to parents and caregivers of young children.

As any new parent knows, welcoming a child is one of the happiest but also most unsettling moments in a person's life. As soon as the concerns about feeding, health and physical safety fade, questions about the child's motor and language development arise: Is my child starting to walk when they should? Is my child talking as they should? What should I do to help them? Why is my neighbor's toddler developing differently?

Even if one tries to avoid comparison, playground interaction with other parents and caregivers inevitably turns around these same questions and raises doubts and insecurities. When Google, chatGPT and other bots are called upon,

Sin dalla sua fondazione nel 1991, Babylonia ha cercato di colmare il divario tra la ricerca scientifica e la realtà dell'educazione linguistica. La maggior parte dei nostri temi sono stati rivolti a insegnanti di lingue e formatori di insegnanti. Con questo numero speciale, vogliamo estendere la nostra missione e fornire risposte adeguate e basate su dati concreti ai genitori e a coloro che si occupano di bambini piccoli.

Come ogni neo-genitore sa, l'arrivo di un bambino è uno dei momenti più felici ma anche più sconvolgenti della vita di una persona. Non appena le preoccupazioni relative all'alimentazione, alla salute e alla sicurezza fisica si affievoliscono, sorgono domande sullo sviluppo motorio e linguistico del bambino: quando dovrebbe iniziare a camminare il mio bambino? Il mio bambino parla come normalmente? Cosa devo fare per aiutarlo? Perché il bambino del mio vicino ha uno sviluppo diverso?

Anche se si cerca di evitare il confronto, le interazioni nel parco giochi con altri

Con questo numero speciale, vogliamo estendere la nostra missione e fornire risposte adeguate e basate su dati concreti ai genitori e a coloro che si occupano di bambini piccoli.

they give nothing but vague, contradictory, and potentially distressing answers.

Yet language acquisition is a fertile field of research, and fairly straightforward answers can be given to most of the questions parents have. This Special Issue of Babylonia has been designed to do so. Bringing together contributions from renowned experts from around the world, it aims to equip and reassure parents in an exciting but sometimes complex adventure as they accompany and support the language development of their young children.

To achieve this, we created an online platform to collect questions from curious and concerned parents about their children's language development. During a short three month campaign, we received 20+ questions that we then grouped by topic. Afterwards we sent them to recognized experts with the request to answer the questions clearly and briefly, focusing on the most important points. The thirteen resulting articles cover a wide range of fundamental topics to help parents support their children's communicative abilities.

genitori e educatori fa sorgere inevitabilmente queste stesse domande e solleva dubbi e insicurezze. Se ci si rivolge a Google, chatGPT e altri bot, questi non danno altro che risposte vaghe, contraddittorie e potenzialmente angoscianti.

Tuttavia, l'acquisizione del linguaggio è un ambito di ricerca ricco di risorse e si possono dare risposte abbastanza chiare alla gran parte delle domande che i genitori si pongono. Questo numero speciale di Babylonia è stato concepito proprio per questo. Riunendo i contributi di rinomati esperti di tutto il mondo, si propone di aiutare e rassicurare i genitori in un'avventura emozionante, ma a volte complessa, come quella di accompagnare e sostenere lo sviluppo linguistico dei loro bambini.

A tal fine, abbiamo creato una piattaforma online per raccogliere le domande di genitori curiosi e preoccupati sullo sviluppo del linguaggio dei loro figli. Durante una breve campagna di tre mesi, abbiamo ricevuto oltre 20 domande che abbiamo poi raggruppato a seconda dell' tema. Successivamente le abbiamo inviate a esperti riconosciuti con la richiesta di rispondere alle domande in modo chiaro e breve, concentrandosi sui punti più importanti. I tredici articoli che ne sono scaturiti coprono un'ampia gamma di argomenti fondamentali per aiutare i genitori a sostenere le capacità comunicative dei loro figli.

Annick De Houwer retired from her position as Professor of Language Acquisition and Multilingualism at the University of Erfurt (Germany) a few years ago but remains active and directs the Harmonious Bilingualism Network (HaBilNet).

Anna Ghimenton is Professor at the Université Grenoble Alpes and is interested in documenting language acquisition and socialisation in various language contact settings.

Amelia Lambelet is a Professor at the University of Teacher Education, State of Vaud (HEP Vaud), and the managing editor of Babylonia

The first half of this Special Issue discusses points that are relevant to all children, regardless of how many languages or language varieties they are growing up with.

We begin with an article by **Annick De Houwer** that provides fundamental information for parents on typical language development milestones in both bilingual and monolingual children. This article focusing on the basics may ease parents' concerns about when their children should start talking and whether they are on the right track for language development.

Sophie Kern then gives essential advice to parents on how to support their child's early language acquisition from the very first months onwards. The article is relevant to all children, whether they are growing up with one, two, or more languages.

One aspect that has become quite popular in how parents interact with very young children is the use of Baby Sign. Set against a brief explanation of the meaning of gestures, **Stéphanie Gobet** explains what Baby Sign is and what its potential advantages are.

In a world where screens are perhaps inevitable, many parents worry about their detrimental effect on young children's language learning and general cognitive development. **Ludovica Serratrice** examines the impact of screen time on children's language learning, providing a nuanced perspective on how digital media can be leveraged to support language development when used appropriately.

La première moitié de ce numéro spécial aborde des points qui concernent tous les enfants, quel que soit le nombre de langues ou de variétés avec lesquelles ils grandissent.

Nous débutons avec un article d'**Annick De Houwer** qui fournit aux parents des informations fondamentales sur les étapes typiques du développement du langage chez les enfants monolingues et bilingues. En se concentrant sur les aspects essentiels, cet article permettra assurément de rassurer les parents quant au moment où leurs enfants devraient commencer à parler et quant à leur progression en matière de développement du langage.

Sophie Kern poursuit avec des conseils précieux pour aider les parents à soutenir l'acquisition précoce du langage de leur enfant, et ce dès les tout premiers mois. Ces recommandations concernent tous les enfants, qu'ils grandissent avec une, deux ou plusieurs langues.

Un sujet qui suscite de plus en plus d'intérêt chez les parents de jeunes enfants est l'utilisation du Baby Sign. **Stéphanie Gobet** décrit ce qu'est le Baby Sign et d'où il vient, puis en souligne les avantages potentiels pour le développement de l'enfant.

Dans un monde où les écrans sont peut-être inévitables, de nombreux parents s'inquiètent de leurs effets néfastes sur l'apprentissage du langage et le développement cognitif général des jeunes enfants. **Ludovica Serratrice** examine l'impact du temps passé devant un écran sur l'apprentissage du langage par les enfants, en apportant une perspective nuancée sur la manière dont les médias numériques peuvent être utilisés pour soutenir le développement du langage lorsqu'ils sont utilisés de manière appropriée.

Sometimes language development does not follow the expected path. Three articles show how developmental patterns may vary.

Elena Babatsouli identifies various signs that may indicate critical differences in developmental paths. Whilst it is important to know how to read these signs and bring awareness to them, it is all the more important to know the resources that are available for supporting children with special needs, creating safe environments for both children and their families.

Agnès Witko addresses the likelihood of bilingual children developing dyslexia. The paper addresses this issue and builds clear links between, on the one hand, the milestones for bilingual development detailed in Annick De Houwer's paper and, on the other hand, the relations between the development of literacy detailed in Janice Nakamura's contribution.

Margaret Kehoe's article focuses on children's speech sounds. After a discussion of "accent" in bilingual children, there is an explanation of what can go wrong with the development of children's speech sounds in both bilingual and monolingual children and how intervention can help.

Manchmal verläuft die Sprachentwicklung nicht wie erwartet. Drei Artikel zeigen, wie unterschiedlich die Entwicklungsmuster sein können.

Elena Babatsouli nennt verschiedene Anzeichen, die auf kritische Unterschiede im Entwicklungsverlauf hinweisen können. Es ist zwar wichtig zu wissen, wie man diese Anzeichen erkennt und sich ihrer bewusst wird, aber noch wichtiger ist es, die Ressourcen zu kennen, die zur Unterstützung von Kindern mit besonderen Bedürfnissen zur Verfügung stehen, um ein sicheres Umfeld für Kinder und ihre Familien zu schaffen.

Agnès Witko befasst sich mit der Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass mehrsprachige Kinder Legasthenie entwickeln. Sie geht auf diese Frage ein und stellt klare Verbindungen her zwischen den Meilensteinen der mehrsprachigen Entwicklung, die im Beitrag von Annick De Houwer beschrieben werden, und den Beziehungen zwischen der Entwicklung der Lese- und Schreibfähigkeit, die im Beitrag von Janice Nakamura beschrieben werden.

Der Artikel von **Margaret Kehoe** konzentriert sich auf die Sprachlaute von Kindern. Nach einer Erörterung des „Akzents" bei mehrsprachigen Kindern wird erläutert, was bei der Entwicklung der Sprachlaute von Kindern sowohl bei mehrsprachigen als auch bei einsprachigen Kindern schief laufen kann und wie Interventionen helfen können.

Yet language acquisition is a fertile field of research, and fairly straightforward answers can be given to most of the questions parents have.

The second part of this Special Issue concerns bilingual language development, that is, the development of two or more languages.

Our experts offer research-based advice for parents raising children with multiple languages, and address challenges like minority language maintenance, teaching children literacy in several languages, and coping with common myths and misconceptions.

Ruth Kircher discusses general settings within which bilingual families find themselves. These settings may be discriminatory, but parents can take charge and try to advocate for language policy changes in their community to the benefit of their children's bilingual development. It helps if parents are empowered through research based knowledge that can counter myths about early bilingual development.

Annick De Houwer zooms in on some of those myths. Unfortunately, they help perpetuate persistent societal biases and express harmful attitudes that stand in the way of harmonious bilingual development. After each myth the article briefly explains the actual research-based facts about early bilingualism.

Het tweede deel van dit speciale nummer gaat over tweetalige taalontwikkeling, dat wil zeggen de ontwikkeling van twee of meer talen.

Onze experts geven op onderzoek gebaseerd advies voor ouders die kinderen opvoeden met meerdere talen en gaan in op uitdagingen zoals het behoud van minderheidstalen, kinderen leren lezen en schrijven in verschillende talen en het omgaan met veelvoorkomende mythen en misvattingen.

Ruth Kircher bespreekt de algemene omstandigheden waarin tweetalige gezinnen zich bevinden. Deze omgevingen kunnen discriminerend zijn, maar ouders kunnen actief worden en proberen te pleiten voor veranderingen in het taalbeleid in hun gemeenschap ten gunste van de tweetalige ontwikkeling van hun kinderen. Het helpt als ouders worden gesterkt door op onderzoek gebaseerde kennis die mythes over vroege tweetalige ontwikkeling kan ontkrachten.

Annick De Houwer zoomt in op een aantal van die mythes. Helaas houden ze hardnekkige maatschappelijke vooroordelen in stand en gaan ze uit van schadelijke attitudes die een harmonische tweetalige ontwikkeling in de weg staan. Na elke mythe geeft het artikel een korte uitleg van de op onderzoek gebaseerde feiten over vroege tweetaligheid.

Throughout this Special Issue, the expert contributors draw on the latest research to empower parents with the knowledge and strategies they need to foster thriving children, whether they are learning just one or more than one language. We hope the Issue will serve as a valuable resource for families navigating the exciting and complex world of language development.

The final 4 articles discuss various ways in which parents can support their children's developing bilingualism.

Virginia Gathercole focuses on the role of exposure to each of the languages children are hearing, and especially on exposure to a minority language. She gives tips about how to increase this exposure and lay the foundation for children's positive attitudes towards their minority language.

Likewise, but from a different perspective, **Simona Montanari** stresses the importance of children having a lot of contact with the minority language. While she recognizes that the "one person, one language" strategy is far from generally effective, she offers insights into how parents can use it to support early bilingual development.

Nikolay Slavkov emphasizes the importance of children developing positive attitudes towards all the languages they need in their daily lives, and stresses the fact that children themselves are major actors in the developmental process. However, they must have sufficient and varied opportunities to learn each language.

Questions about bilingual language development are not limited to the moment when children enter school. **Janice Nakamura** details the various occasions when children are exposed to literacy. These are introduced well before formal schooling and offer important opportunities for the development of metalinguistic knowledge about the ways in which different writing systems encode oral language.

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En questa ediziun speciala serefereschan las expertas ed ils experts als pli novs resultats da perscrutaziuns per dar vinavon als geniturs las enconuschientschas e strategias ch'els drovan per promover affons cun success, independentamein dil fatg sch'els emprendan mo in ni plirs lungatgs. Nus sperein che l'ediziun surveschi sco resursa preziusa a famiglias per sesanflar el mund interessant e cumplex dil svilup linguistic.

Tema

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES FOR BILINGUAL AND MONOLINGUAL CHILDREN

Between September and December 2023, Babylonia collected questions from parents regarding their children's language development. This article aims to answer the following questions:
– When should my child start talking?
- What are the typical milestones in language development?

Annick De Houwer
| Harmonious Bilingualism Network (HaBilNet)

Introduction

"And, is your baby saying anything yet?": this is a question young parents frequently hear. Indeed, almost anywhere in the world, starting to speak is considered a key event in a young child's life. Language acquisition specialists have identified several such key events or milestones in young children's language development. If children miss out on certain language development milestones (henceforth: milestones), they may be experiencing problems with the language learning process and may need professional help (see the article on Communication Disorders Essentials for Parents by E. Babatsouli elsewhere in this volume).

If their toddlers are *not* saying anything by the time they are one and a half, many parents will be worried. They will worry because grandma says that is not normal, and something must be wrong, or because they have heard other toddlers speak quite well.

Parents are thus comparing their own children's behavior to that of others. Speech and language professionals do the same, based on their experience with many more children and, where available, on so-called "norming studies". These give information on behaviors in large groups of same-aged children. Any given child can then be compared to others and may be doing better than 80 % of her peers (nothing to worry about!), or worse than 10 % of her peers (that may indicate a problem), or anywhere in between. Milestones represent norms, "standards", for children's expected language development.

Milestones are primarily identified for very young children: what happens in the first years is crucial for later developments. This article focuses on bilingual and monolingual children under age 3 who have been growing up with a particular language from birth. It draws

When should my child start talking?

mainly on Clark (2024) and De Houwer (2009, 2021). The bilinguals here have heard two first languages from the very beginning.

For children raised with two languages, parents and language professionals often expect a delay in reaching milestones compared to monolinguals (cf. my article on Myths About Bilingual Development And Why They Hurt elsewhere in this volume). However, there are no differences between the ages at which bilinguals and monolinguals reach important milestones.

The main milestones and their timings

There are milestones that are important for all children and milestones that are relevant only for bilingual children.

(a) Milestones that are important for all children

The 5 milestones below are the most significant ones for the under-threes. However, they are not the only important steps in child language development (see the website of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association ASHA (n.d.) for an easily accessible and more comprehensive list). There is great variation in the ages around which the 5 milestones are reached. The range of variation is similar for bilinguals and monolinguals. Although the number of early words understood is not mentioned as a milestone here, it is noteworthy that the number of words 13-month-old bilinguals understand equals the average number expected for much older, 18-month-old monolinguals.

(1) Babbling

Babbling consisting of apparently meaningless strings of repeated syllables, like *bababa*, or *gugu*, or combined variations like *dadabubu*, occurs mostly between 7 and 10 months. Although some elements of babbling may sound like one particular language, and others like another, babbling is usually not clearly linked to a particular language. Babbling is a rather solitary activity that babies often engage in while they are in bed. They do not normally use babbling to talk to somebody.

(2) Understanding words

Children need to understand words as an entry into language. Typically, they will first learn to respond to their own name. However, it is only by 9 or 10 months of age that most babies will show clear understanding of some words and phrases. By the time children are 11 or 12 months old, parents are usually able to list many different words that they think their child understands.

(3) First words

The first birthday often coincides with what parents interpret as children's first word. Rather than apparently meaningless babbling, children now use word-like forms that appear to mean something. They may say something in the company

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of a parent while pointing and looking at an object or person. However, they may also start to say word-like forms to accompany actions or events, even if nobody else is present. For instance, they may say *oop* when they fall down or something has fallen down. The difference with babbling is that (a) there appears to be meaning attached to something children says, and (b) the forms of what they say differ from the repeated syllables used in babbling. Most children will have started saying their first word by age 13 months. Bilingual children may start out saying words only in a single language, or in both.

The answer to the question on the previous page, then, is that children should start talking at the beginning of their second year.

(4) Saying a total of 50 different words

In the course of the second year of life, the number of different words that children say increases. Some children add new words very fast, others take a lot more time. By the second birthday, children should at minimum have recently used 50 different words in speaking. Many children, including bilinguals, reach the 50-word mark well before (by 20 months). The 50-word mark is important because you need a sufficient number of words to be able to build sentences.

(5) Combining words

Indeed, in language we use combinations of words to form sentences. Much of our speaking consists of sentences, although we also use single words, as in *yes* or *no* or *there*. Once children start to use single words, they typically will *only* say single words. But after some time, they will also start to combine 2 words without a pause in between. They may say things like *bottle done*, or *pick up*, or *mommy no*. Being able to combine words with each other for constructing a larger meaning than each word by itself is a crucial step towards being able to say longer sentences that combine multiple words. No wonder that the ability to combine words is also a major milestone. It is expected that by the second birthday, children have started to combine at least 2 words with each other.

Most children start combining words well before they turn 2, and may soon be combining 3 or 4 words with each other. Verbally precocious children may be constructing veritable sentences by age 2. Bilingual children's early word combinations may consist of 2 words from the same language (unilingual utterances), or of one word from each language (mixed utterances). Bilinguals may combine words in each of their two languages from the very beginning, or just in one.

(b) Milestones important only for bilingual children

In addition to the universal milestones listed above, there are at least two main milestones that are relevant to young bilinguals but not to monolinguals.

(6) Understanding words in two languages

Crucial in a bilingual setting is that children learn to understand words and phrases in two languages rather than just one. Without comprehension in two languages, children cannot qualify as bilingual (see below for a discussion of speaking two languages). By the time they are 13 months of age, bilingual children understand words in each of their languages.

(7) Showing evidence of separate grammatical systems

Children start to use clear grammatical markers in their speech once they start to use sentences containing 3 or 4 words. As for monolinguals, there is great variation in the ages when bilinguals start to do this, but by the time children are about 3, they should typically say sentences with at least 4 words.

Soon after bilingual children start to build sentences consisting of 3 or 4 words, most of their sentences with words from the same single language (unilingual utterances) follow the grammatical rules of that language (including word order rules). They do this in each of their languages. This means that bilinguals typically develop 2 separate grammatical systems.

Bilingual children show evidence of two basically separate grammatical systems by age 3 at the very latest (many bilingual children show evidence of separate grammatical systems already around age 2 and earlier). Bilingual children who

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appear to use a fused grammatical system even by age 3 are thus developing outside the bilingual norm. We can consider age 3 as a normative milestone for bilingual children's use of different grammatical systems.

Aside from milestones (6) and (7) there may be other typically bilingual milestones that can give information on how well bilingual children are developing language skills. A possible candidate may be bilingual children's use of translation equivalents, that is, words from each language that basically mean the same thing.

Do bilingual children reach language milestones at the same time in both of their languages?

Bilingual children typically are learning to understand and say words and sentences in 2 languages. These language abilities do not necessarily develop in each language simultaneously. Uneven development across languages is common, meaning that one language develops faster for some or all aspects of language use than the other. As far as speaking is concerned, development may be so uneven that children speak just a single language.

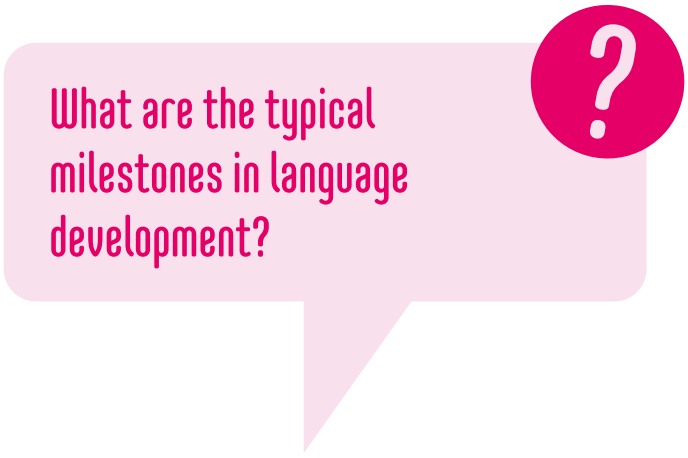
The fact that it is normal for bilingual children to develop each language at different speeds implies that they can reach specific milestones in each language at different times. Uneven development also allows for the possibility that some milestones are only reached for a single language.

For bilingual children, then, one should not expect milestones to be reached in each of 2 languages separately; nor should one expect milestones to be reached in 2 languages simultaneously. Of course, there are many bilingual children who do reach particular milestones in both languages, and who reach these at the same time for both languages. As is also the case for monolingual children, however, reaching a particular milestone in just a single language is what counts. Once bilingual children have reached a milestone in a particular language, and have done so around the expected age, they are showing the level of linguistic development associated with that milestone. The fact that they have not reached that same milestone in the other language will then be due to other factors, such as lesser opportunity to hear that language. It is only when bilingual children have not reached an expected milestone for either of their languages that one has to start worrying. Bilingual children who fail to reach expected milestones in either of their languages may have hearing difficulties or another kind of physiologically and/or neurologically determined condition that is known to delay language development. It is also possible that bilingual children with a language delay are deprived of the right kind of language input in both their languages.

For identifying bilingual children's milestones involving the size of their vocabulary their total word knowledge must be taken into account, as is done for monolingual children. Bilingual children's total word knowledge combines the words they know in both languages.

Conclusion

Specific bilingual milestones apply to bilingual children in addition to the more universal language development milestones that are relevant for all children. Children are expected to start talking a bit soon after their first birthday. Bilinguals and monolinguals reach milestones at similar ages, showing no evidence of a bilingual "delay". In fact, monolinguals can be seen as being delayed in comparison to bilinguals when the total number of words understood is considered.



Tema

LE RÔLE DES PARENTS DANS LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DU LANGAGE DE L'ENFANT MONOLINGUE

Entre septembre et décembre 2023, Babylonia a recueilli des questions posées pardes parents sur le développement du langage de leurs enfants. Cet article vise à répondre aux questions suivantes :

– Comment puis-je encourager le développement du langage de mon enfant ?
– Quelles stratégies puis-je utiliser pour promouvoir le développement du vocabulaire ?
– Comment puis-je aider mon enfant à développer une bonne grammaire et une bonne structure de phrase ?
– Quel rôle la lecture et la narration jouent-elles dans le développement du langage ?

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Le développement du langage chez un enfant est un processus naturel mais complexe qui peut être soutenu par les stimulations langagières de son environnement. En effet, la recherche (Anderson et al., 2021) démontre qu'il existe un lien étroit entre la quantité et la qualité du langage auquel un enfant est exposé et son développement linguistique. Plus l'enfant participe à des interactions, est exposé à des bruits, des sons ou des paroles, et a la possibilité de s'exprimer, plus ses compétences langagières seront importantes. Non seulement il pourra mettre du sens sur le monde qui l'entoure mais il sera également capable de s'engager de manière efficiente dans des interactions sociales pour transmettre des informations ou exprimer ses sentiments. Mais la quantité ne fait pas tout. L'enfant a également besoin de stimulations qui soient adaptées à son niveau de développement. Les parents sont souvent les interlocuteurs privilégiés des enfants. Ils ont donc l'opportunité de soutenir leur développement langagier, en adoptant des comportements langagiers particuliers.

Comment soutenir le développement de la perception auditive de votre enfant ?

Pour apprendre à parler, l'enfant a besoin d'être immergé dès sa naissance dans un environnement sonore riche. Pour soutenir le développement de la perception auditive, vous pouvez :

– Faire entendre à votre enfant des bruits et des sons de nature et d'origine diverses. Il est recommandé pour cela d'utiliser des jouets qui font du bruit comme des hochets, des instruments de musique ou encore d'attirer l'attention des enfants sur les bruits et sons de la vie quotidienne ;
– Jouer avec la langue et en particulier avec les sons et les intonations en les exagérant par exemple ou en changeant de rythme ;
– Faire écouter de la musique à votre enfant, des berceuses, chanter des chansons ou réciter des comptines ;
– Considérer votre enfant comme un interlocuteur à part entière même

s'il ne produit pas encore des mots, en interagissant avec lui et en lui parlant très régulièrement.

L'enfant a besoin d'un environnement sonore stimulant pour développer ses capacités. Mais il doit également se sentir en sécurité et ne pas être stimulé de manière exagérée. Aussi, est-il recommandé :

- D'être attentif au tempérament naturel de votre enfant, de respecter son rythme et ne pas trop le stimuler ;
- D'éviter d'exposer votre enfant à des sources sonores trop intenses et à de la parole en continu.

Comment soutenir les compétences d'attention et d'écoute de votre enfant ?

Même si le jeune enfant est friand de sons et de parole dès la naissance, l'apprentissage du langage sera favorisé par une attention et une écoute attentive. Les différentes stratégies que vous pouvez utiliser pour soutenir l'attention et l'écoute de votre enfant sont :

- Attirer son attention en utilisant son prénom ou des termes affectueux (*mon/ma chéri/e*) avant de vous adresser à lui ;
- Parler à votre enfant en le regardant et en vous mettant à sa hauteur ;
- Lui parler lentement en articulant bien les mots ;
- Eviter les lieux trop bruyants avec des bruits de fond (télévision, tablette, téléphone…) qui peuvent couvrir les paroles adressées à votre enfant.

Comment soutenir la compréhension verbale de votre enfant ?

Quelques mois avant de parler, les enfants commencent à comprendre la signification des mots ainsi que de certains énoncés simples et courants. La compréhension qui consiste à faire le lien entre un mot et ce qu'il représente peut-être favorisée par des stratégies langagières particulières de votre part comme :

- Nommer les objets et les personnes présentes dans la situation et accompagner ces dénominations par des gestes de pointage ;
- Décrire les actions au moment où elles sont réalisées, comme par exemple nommer les différentes actions lors de la préparation d'un repas ou pendant une séance d'habillage ;
- Utiliser un même mot dans des phrases différentes (*tu as vu le chat ? où est le chat ? le chat miaule quand il a faim…*) ;
- Introduire des informations nouvelles dans des phrases simples et en accentuant les mots nouveaux ;
- Utiliser des mots simples et fréquents, puis diversifier le vocabulaire et les structures de phrases quand l'enfant grandit. En effet, votre enfant a besoin d'étendre son vocabulaire et de ne pas être exposé uniquement aux mots enfantins tels que *dodo* pour *dormir* ou *miam miam* pour *manger*. Par ailleurs, il est également recommandé de ne pas parler de soi ou de son enfant à la 3ème personne mais d'utiliser les pronoms personnels adéquats (ne pas dire : *maman elle va enlever la couche au bébé* mais *je vais t'enlever la couche* ou encore remplacer *on va prendre le bain* par *je vais te donner le bain* ou *tu vas prendre le bain*).

Comment puis-je encourager le développement du langage de mon enfant ?

Comment soutenir la production verbale de votre enfant ?

Bien avant de produire leurs premiers mots les enfants manifestent leurs envies et besoin d'interagir avec leur entourage par des mimiques, des vocalisations ou encore des gestes. Ces tentatives d'interactions sont importantes et leur présence est le signe d'un développement communicatif et langagier qui ne demande qu'à s'épanouir. Les adultes qui entourent les enfants ont à leur disposition des méthodes simples pour encourager la communication des enfants avant que ceux-ci ne se mettent à parler. Au quotidien, vous pouvez :

Quelles stratégies puis-je utiliser pour promouvoir le développement du vocabulaire ?

Comment puis-je aider mon enfant à développer une bonne grammaire et une bonne structure de phrase ?

– Féliciter, répéter et mettre du sens sur les tentatives de communication de votre enfant, et ce, dès les premiers mois. Si votre enfant vocalise (répétition de sons) en jouant, ou même tape sur une cuillère, n'hésitez pas à faire la même chose. Imiter les sons, les mots et les actions des enfants leur montre qu'ils sont entendus et que les adultes approuvent ce qu'ils font ou disent. Cela favorise également le tour de rôle ;
– Être réceptifs aux tentatives de communication de votre enfant en y répondant systématiquement et aussi rapidement que possible et en les interprétant si nécessaire. Si votre enfant montre du doigt le lait qu'il veut boire, vous pouvez interpréter ce qu'il essaie de dire et lui répondre en disant : *Du lait ! Tu veux du lait !.*
– Ces stratégies vont pousser votre enfant à participer aux interactions de façon préverbale dans un premier temps puis de façon verbale aux alentours de son premier anniversaire. Mais, il existe d'autres moyens de provoquer la production verbale de votre enfant comme de :
– Suivre ses initiatives et l'inciter à parler en vous appuyant sur ses désirs et ses centres d'intérêt ;
– Renforcer de façon positive ses actions et productions, en le félicitant et en l'encourageant à continuer (*oui c'est bien, tu as raison c'est un chien, bravo !*) ;
– Faire dénommer les objets, personnes, actions de l'environnement immédiat en posant des questions (*c'est quoi ça ? qu'est-ce qu'il fait…*) ;
– Lui laisser le temps de répondre car il a plus besoin de temps qu'un adulte, et s'il ne répond toujours pas, simplifier les questions en passant de questions ouvertes à des questions à choix multiple ou à des questions qui demandent une réponse oui/non (*qu'est-ce que tu veux ? tu veux une banane ou un gâteau ? tu veux une banane ?*) ;
– L'encourager à raconter quelque chose qui lui est arrivé (chez le médecin, lors d'un goûter d'anniversaire), décrire les images de ses albums, verbaliser ses choix (de nourriture, de vêtements, donner son avis (sur un plat, sur un jeu,…).

Comment soutenir le développement du vocabulaire et de la grammaire de votre enfant ?

Les adultes jouent également un rôle important dans l'apprentissage du vocabulaire et de la grammaire. Pour aider votre enfant à connaître plus de mots et à être capable de produire des phrases grammaticalement correctes, voici quelques conseils pratiques que vous pouvez suivre :

– Introduire et répéter des mots nouveaux en vous basant sur les objets/actions du quotidien mais aussi ceux et celles présents dans les livres et les imagiers ;
– Parler avec l'enfant en utilisant un langage grammaticalement correct et en lui fournissant des modèles linguistiques à imiter ;
– Reprendre les énoncés de votre enfant en les étendant afin de préciser la signification des mots (Enfant : *c'est un ours* ; Adulte : *oui c'est un ours brun. Comme tous les ours, il aime le miel !*) ;
– Reprendre les mots mal prononcés et reformuler les phrases de votre

enfant si elles sont maladroites afin qu'il entende les formes correctes. Qu'il s'agisse d'erreurs de prononciation ou de grammaire, il est recommandé de ne pas interrompre l'enfant dans sa production mais de corriger ses erreurs 'en passant'. Cela ne sert à rien de corriger les erreurs de prononciation ou grammaticales des enfants.

Comment aider votre enfant à développer sa capacité à raconter des histoires ?

Certaines activités parents/enfants sont plus propices que d'autres pour le soutien du développement du langage de l'enfant. La lecture partagée facilite le développement de l'enfant en particulier quand elle est réalisée de manière interactive (Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000). En tant que parent, vous pouvez intégrer l'enfant dans cette activité et stimuler sa participation verbale en :

- Posant des questions ;
- L'encourageant à prédire ce qui va se passer dans l'histoire ;
- Discutant avec lui des personnages, de leurs sentiments et émotions ;
- En commentant avec lui les événements de l'histoire.

Les enfants qui sont souvent exposés à des lectures partagées interactives dès leur plus jeune âge, acquièrent le langage oral plus vite, entrent à l'école en ayant un stock de vocabulaire plus important et apprennent à lire mieux et plus vite (Flack et al., 2018) que les autres enfants. Il existe plusieurs raisons à cet avantage. Tout d'abord, en contexte de lecture interactive partagée, les enfants sont exposés à des mots et/ou des structures morphosyntaxiques plus rares et plus complexes, auxquels ils ne sont pas exposés lors d'autres activités. Non seulement, la langue que les enfants entendent est quantitativement et qualitativement riche mais l'activité soutient également leur compréhension et leur participation verbale. Elle favorise l'attention conjointe entre l'adulte et l'enfant, ce qui renforce les liens affectifs et contribue à créer un environnement sécurisant et stimulant pour l'apprentissage. De plus, la lecture interactive encourage l'interaction entre l'adulte et l'enfant, ce qui favorise le développement de compétences conversationnelles et sociales. Enfin, la lecture interactive permet également à l'enfant de développer des compétences narratives en comprenant la structure des récits et en apprenant à raconter ses propres histoires (pour plus de détails sur ce point, nous vous conseillons de lire l'article de Janice Nakamura dans ce numéro).

Quel rôle la lecture et la narration jouent-elles dans le développement du langage ?

Conclusion

En conclusion, vous parents, vous pouvez jouer un rôle important dans le développement de la communication et du langage de votre enfant en lui fournissant un environnement stimulant. L'enfant profite de ces stimulations aidantes dans des activités comme la lecture partagée, les jeux avec les jouets mais également dans ses activités quotidiennes comme au cours d'un repas ou dans son bain. Mais attention, il ne s'agit pas de lui imposer des leçons de langage ou encore de le tester sur ses connaissances mais de l'aider à progresser dans son développement dans la joie et la bonne humeur. Parler et communiquer avec les autres doit rester un plaisir de tous les moments !

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Tema

L'APPRENTISSAGE DU BÉBÉ SIGNE PAR LES BÉBÉS ENTENDANTS FACILITE-T-IL LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DU LANGAGE VOCAL ?

Entre septembre et décembre 2023, Babylonia a recueilli des questions posées par des parents sur le développement du langage de leurs enfants . Cet article vise à répondre à la question suivante :

– L'apprentissage du Bébé Signe par les bébés entendants facilite-t-il le développement du langage vocal ?

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Dès la naissance, l'enfant communique avec son entourage par le biais de comportements linguistiques verbaux et gestuels. Chez le nourrisson, il s'agit avant tout d'une communication préverbale qui se réalise aussi par les canaux corporels. Le bébé a besoin d'interagir, de se manifester, d'énoncer ses besoins. Or, les conditions physiologiques ne permettent pas qu'il puisse s'exprimer avec des mots avant 11-13 mois (et dans des contextes précis), les cordes vocales étant immatures durant les premiers mois. Pour autant, l'enfant emploie très tôt une communication multimodale qui se manifeste à travers des postures, des mimiques, des cris, des pleurs, des gazouillis et des gestes. Ces derniers assurent une communication accessible, spontanée et naturelle et sont considérés comme faisant partie du développement typique du langage.

Les nourrissons sont également particulièrement observés par l'environnement et décryptés par les parents en ce qui concerne l'expression de leurs besoins. Les gestes produits vont alors s'affiner au point de devenir intentionnels et volontaires, et se réaliseront dans une visée communicative : par exemple lorsque l'enfant applaudit pour produire « bravo », bouge la main pour dire « au-revoir », ou pointe vers un objet précis qu'il n'a pas la capacité de nommer vocalement. Pour résumer brièvement, dès l'âge de 6 mois environ le nourrisson utilise des gestes déictiques pour désigner, donner, montrer. Ainsi, l'enfant attire l'attention des parents, crée un espace d'interactions langagières, en faisant appel à des compétences socio-cognitives. Ce stade est également celui de l'émergence du lexique, en réception dans un premier temps puis en production, dans un second temps. L'association des gestes et des mots aide le bébé à mieux saisir le sens et donc à mieux comprendre le monde qui l'entoure.

À partir de 12 mois, les enfants vont produire un autre type des gestes, dits iconiques ou symboliques selon la littérature. Ceux-ci font référence à un objet ou une personne, un lieu ou une action. Le bébé va utiliser ses mains, ainsi que son corps ou une mimique faciale pour construire du sens. Par exemple, il

L'apprentissage du *Bébé Signe* par les bébés entendants facilite-t-il le développement du langage vocal ?

écartera les mains pour signifier « gros » ou « grand », ou ouvrira et fermera la bouche pour le mot « poisson », voire les deux en même temps.

Le geste est donc un élément essentiel de la communication chez les tout-petits et contribue au développement du langage. Face à ce constat de gestualité précoce, des chercheuses américaines (Susan Goodwyn et Linda Acredolo) ont créé la méthode « Baby Signs » dans les années 1970, à ne pas confondre avec la langue des signes utilisées avec des enfants malentendants (nous ne traiterons pas la langue des signes dans cette contribution, mais encourageons les parents intéressés à consulter l'article de Gary Morgan, 2022). En 2006, ce concept est mis en place en France par Monica Companys et Nathanaëlle Bouhier-Charles. Depuis, il connaît un essor avec la mise en place d'ateliers à destination des parents mais également de professionnels de crèches.

Qu'est-ce que le Bébé Signe ?

Le Bébé Signe est avant tout d'un outil de communication parental dont les signes sont extraits de la Langue des Signes Française (LSF), tout en préservant la structure du français, et utilisé auprès d'enfants pré-verbaux, dès les premiers mois afin qu'il s'y familiarise. Toutefois, l'âge idéal se situe entre 4 et 6 mois, quand les capacités d'attentions de l'enfant sont développées. Le Bébé Signe, produit par des parents entendants pour leur.s enfant.s entendant.s, est produit simultanément à la parole vocale. Les signes réalisés par les parents renforcent certains mots : selon les situations, cela peut-être en lien avec les besoins primaires (« manger », « pipi », « caca », « changer la couche »), en situation ludique avec le nom des couleurs ou des animaux. Les signes sont adaptés aux besoins contextualisés de l'enfant. Ils sont donc appris implicitement par l'enfant, par imitation. Ils peuvent aussi être produits dans un environnement bruyant, ou pour pallier la prononciation difficile de certains items (par exemple, pour « changer la couche » un seul signe bi-manuel suffit). Bien que les signes employés dans le cadre du Bébé Signe soient ceux de la Langue des Signes Française (LSF), il s'agit avant tout d'un outil de communication tandis que la LSF est une langue visuo-gestuelle, ayant des structures grammaticales précises et indispensables à la construction du sens lors des différents types de discours.

Le premier apport de la méthode du Bébé Signe est de faciliter la compréhension des items par la modalité visuelle : le sens est donné à voir en parallèle de la production vocale. Le fait que le nourrisson comprenne mieux contribue à son enrichissement lexical et à son développement des connaissances du monde, en particulier pour les catégorisations, tout en respectant son développement cognitif et moteur. Même si l'enfant peut ne pas utiliser les signes, cette communication visuelle le place activement dans l'interaction comme un être communiquant, échangeant, dialoguant (Mueller, Sepulveda, & Rodriguez, 2013).

En outre, le Bébé Signe répond à la volonté des parents d'enrichir la relation avec leur enfant, et d'adapter leurs réponses. Selon l'étude de Kirk et al. (2013), les mères ayant utilisé les signes sont plus attentives à la communication para-verbale de leur bébé, induisant une diminution des pleurs chez ce dernier.

Bien que les études sur le Bébé Signe ne montrent pas d'impacts significatifs sur le développement du langage des enfants entendants, il apparaît un « confort communicatif » avec le bébé, qui est, du point de vue de la motricité, capable de (re)produire des gestes avant d'articuler des mots et ainsi exprimer des besoins liés à son quotidien. Par exemple, la réalisation de signes liés aux émotions peut aider l'enfant à traduire ce qu'il ressent. Quand les émotions sont trop intenses, et que l'enfant ne peut poser de mots dessus, cela devient anxiogène pour lui. Les signes, qu'il aura appris, rendront visible son ressenti.

Pour conclure, le Bébé Signe contribue à l'amélioration des capacités de communication et de la compréhension entre les adultes et les enfants. Ces derniers s'expriment d'avantage et confortent le bain langagier nécessaire pour développer les interactions. Il réduit également les situations d'incompréhension, qui peuvent entraîner de la frustration, car l'emploi du signe pallie l'absence de connaissance de mots ou la difficulté de prononciation par les enfants. Le Bébé Signe est donc un outil de communication transitoire, facilitateur dans l'interaction mais qui ne se substitue pas au langage vocal. D'ailleurs, les signes diminueront au profit d'une meilleure maîtrise de ce dernier. Toutefois, pour les parents qui souhaitent adopter cette pratique, il est conseillé de produire fréquemment le Bébé Signe, et d'avoir conscience qu'il exige que les mains soient libres, et que le regard de l'enfant se porte vers l'adulte signeur, avec une certaine proximité. Les temps de repas, de comptines et de jeux sont les moments les plus favorables à l'emploi des signes. Ces derniers peuvent être appris à l'aide de livres, tels que « Bébé Signe, premiers signes en LSF » ou encore « Bébé fais-moi un signe » édités chez Monica Companys (https://www.monica-companys.com/collections/livres).

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Tema

HOW DOES SCREEN TIME AFFECT LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT?

Between September and December 2023, Babylonia collected questions from parents regarding their children's language development. This article aims to answer the following questions:

- **I am the mom of a 17 months old. My husband lets him watch some TV (mainly kids songs, in German, my husband's first language) but I don't because I heard that it is bad for his language development. I recently noticed that our son actually learns things from those videos (especially counting on his fingers, or clapping when instructed etc.) I don't know what to think anymore: is educational TV really that bad for language learning in toddlers?**
- **What are the effects of screen time on language development?**
- **Can the child learn the English language by watching English-speaking cartoons?**

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In the media and digital landscape in which most of us live nowadays it is difficult to keep away even very young children from the lure of digital screens. While TV has now been with us for several generations, it is the ubiquity of smartphones and tablets that has made screen time an even bigger concern for parents and educationalists.

Games, songs, and videos are extremely tempting for children of all ages who are digital natives and who are more likely to hold a smartphone or a tablet than a book. Whether we like it or not, digital media is part of our children's lives, and it is here to stay. The question therefore is how to monitor children's access to suitable content, at the right age, and for the appropriate amount of time. In the case of preschool children who are in the early stages of language development, one of the questions that parents often have is whether screen time is detrimental or beneficial to their language skills. And in the case of parents of multilingual children another legitimate concern is whether digital media can be useful to support the learning of their heritage language.

One of the main findings that is emerging from decades of research on children's media consumption is that more screen time and the presence of background television are associated with lower language skills. In contrast, programs with an age-appropriate educational content and co-viewing with an adult are associated with better language outcomes (Madigal et al., 2020; Alroqi et al., 2023). When children and adults sit together for screen time, there are opportunities to talk about what is happening on their digital devices. Adults who ask open-ended questions (e.g. *What is happening there? Why did the penguin feel sad? What do you think he'll do next?*) create a conversational context where they can check on the child's understanding of what they are watching and they can ask children to expand on what they say. Adults can provide new information, e.g. new words, new content, and give the child a chance to ask questions and to make their own contribution.

I am the mom of a 17 months old. My husband lets him watch some TV (mainly kids songs, in German, my husband's first language) but I don't because I heard that it is bad for his language development. I recently noticed that our son actually learns things from those videos (especially counting on his fingers, or clapping when instructed etc.) I don't know what to think anymore: is educational TV really that bad for language learning in toddlers?

So, the answer as to whether screen time is good or bad is more nuanced than a straightforward yes or no, and it really depends on what children watch and with whom. That educational programs have an advantage when it comes to language learning is rather intuitive as the explicit intent of the designers is to use media to teach children something new. Educational programs are likely to introduce a new topic and use new words to talk about it, possibly using several repetitions in different contexts, and the characters in the program may question each other about what is happening, thus providing repeated exposures to new content and to new words. The character of Dora the Explorer in the eponymous cartoon, for example, switches between English and Spanish and gets her viewers to repeat words and phrases. This pedagogical focus structures children's learning in ways that passive viewing of a video or listening to a song cannot do, at least not to the same extent.

Nevertheless, the way in which children learn is in interaction with others, typically a more experienced adult, although of course children can also learn from their peers (Tenenbaum et al., 2020). TV, YouTube videos, or an app – even those that have been designed with an educational purpose - cannot be interactional to the same extent that talking to a real person is. It is the backward and forward of conversation, on top of the sheer number of words that children hear, that predicts vocabulary acquisition (e.g. Donnelly & Kidd, 2021). And this is where the role of co-viewing with an adult becomes important during screen time. While watching a cartoon, a film, or even playing a video game together, depending on the age of the child and their interest, an adult can take advantage of many opportunities for scaffolding language learning by asking questions, providing recasts and expansions of what the child has said that enrich their knowledge and understanding. This is why learning a language purely by watching a screen is unlikely. Without any other source of rich interactional language exposure with speakers in real life, children will at most pick up a few

Can the child learn the English language by watching English-speaking cartoons?

What are the effects of screen time on language development?

words from a screen, but will not learn language in any meaningful way.

Questions from an adult about the unfolding plot of a story can probe the child's understanding and the extent to which they can make inferences. i.e., fill the gaps, about what is not explicitly stated (why is a character intentionally lying for example? To save face? To get away with something? To spare someone's feelings?). Inferencing skills are extremely important, not just to understand spoken language in everyday life, but they are a key predictor of reading comprehension; children who are better able to make inferences are more likely to become good readers (Cain & Oakhill, 1999). The ability to make inferences develops over time and different media – written text, picture book, video – could support different types of inferences. For example, in a video an inference about the emotional state of a character could be made more accessible by dialogue between characters (linguistic information), by facial expressions and other body language (visual information) and it could be further emphasised by sound (e.g., sad music). Seeing information on a screen, through pictures, sounds, and words together, can help children understand certain ideas more easily than if they only listened to or read about the facts. Research on how different types of media help with understanding different ideas is still limited, but there are reasons to believe that screen time is not necessarily a bad thing for language development, and in fact that it can assist in decoding the complexity of a situation or state of affairs and in making those all-important inferences (Kendeou et al., 2020). As is often the case it is not so much about the medium itself, and more about how it is used.

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Tema

COMMUNICATION DISORDERS ESSENTIALS FOR PARENTS

Between September and December 2023, Babylonia collected questions from parents regarding their children's language development. This article aims to answer the following questions:

- **What are some red flags (signs) for potential communication disorder?**
- **How can I differentiate between language difficulties and learning disabilities?**
- **How can I foster strong communication skills in children with communication disorders?**
- **What resources or therapies are there for children with language delays?**

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Introduction

Communication disorders encompass a wide range of disorders negatively impacting children's communication skills, most of which manifest as speech and language disorders. High-risk factors for communicative disorder include (list incomplete):

- preterm birth or traumatic birth (e.g., physical trauma, oxygen deprivation, and/or infection)
- low birth weight
- adverse early childhood experiences (poverty, parental stress, abuse)
- diagnosis of one of the following: cleft lip/palate, craniofacial anomalies, dental malocclusion, oral-motor dysfunction
- genetic or neurological disorders (such as autism, Down syndrome)
- lasting health concerns (such as weak lungs)
- hearing loss/deafness
- environmental hazards (e.g., lead exposure).

Note that a bilingual environment is NOT a risk factor.

Speech and language disorders come in different forms and exhibit specific characteristics with one in four (!) children younger than 5 being at moderate to high risk. Developmental language disorder and speech sound disorder are major categories, and may first show up (and/or persist) as a language delay.

A delayed language onset has been linked to persisting language and speech difficulties which may carry over into written language skills and academic performance later in life. Speech and language disorders are risk factors for behavioral and emotional issues such as irritability, sudden mood changes, excessive fear, and social withdrawal, as well as for learning difficulties, like dyslexia or dysgraphia, as described further below.

What are some red flags (signs) for potential communication disorder?

Red flags for potential communication disorder

Even though young children develop at their own pace, there are known growth and developmental indicators (milestones) for typically developing children regarding their language, motor, cognitive, emotional, and/or social/behavioral skills. The fact that a child has failed to meet particular speech and language milestones, and thus shows a delay, is a red flag for a potential communication disorder. Such red flags differ depending on the type of underlying disorder.

Developmental milestones identified at ages 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 24, 30 months, and 3, 4, and 5 years of age help differentiate typical from atypical development. They are divided into social/emotional, language/communication, cognitive (learning/thinking/problem-solving), and movement/physical development. You can find comprehensive information on these milestones on the CDC (n.d.) website.

These milestones also hold for bilingual children, but bilinguals' language skills in each language separately are not directly comparable to those of respective monolingual peers. Bilingual children's ability to understand and use two languages is to a large extent determined by the type and amount of exposure to and use of their languages; these typically vary between children, whether they are bilingual or monolingual. Bilingualism does not cause communication disorder; bilinguals diagnosed with a communication disorder have comparable language skills as their peers with the same disorder. If you suspect your bilingual child has a language delay or disorder, difficulties will be observed in both languages. The recommendation is that you identify a professional who is trained in bilingual assessment and intervention for clinical service provision (see further in this volume the article by De Houwer on Language Development Milestones for Bilingual and Monolingual Children).

Regular parental/caregiver monitoring during a child's first five years supports early identification of red flags, that is, possible signs.

Signs of language delay or disorder

What follows is a selection of "red flags" that could be a sign of language delay or disorder in children up until around age 8.

Some red flags are already noticeable in the second half of the first year. A child should be able to react to someone's speech and respond when they hear their name by age 7 to 12 months so if children are not able to do so this would be a red flag. By 8 or 9 months, children should be babbling, and their babbling should include consonants like b, d, m, and n, alongside vowels, and become gradually richer and more complex. Reduced babbling might indicate a speech sound or hearing disorder.

Two-year-olds who use fewer than 50 words and whose utterances lack multi-word combinations are considered "late talkers". This language delay usually involves the inability to comprehend spoken language and produce speech that is intelligible to caregivers and others. This greatly challenges meaningful social interaction. If late talkers are in fact developing typically, that is, if the early delay is not caused by a language disorder, they will have caught up with age- and language-matched peers by age 3, by which time their speech is also 75 % intelligible. Frequent misunderstandings and an inability to follow directions in the preschool years may indicate problems with auditory processing.

How can I differentiate between language difficulties and learning disabilities?

Children are normally able to speak increasingly more accurately by age 4. Speaking little, leaving out words or replacing them with '*thing*', and stalling while speaking can be indicators of language delay in preschoolers. Sure-tell signs are very simple and typically short utterances, limited vocabulary, many grammatical errors, unintelligible speech, and a continuing tendency to avoid or withdraw from social interaction. A child with persisting speech and language difficulties by age 4 is more likely to be diagnosed with a disorder rather than "just" a delay.

Speech and language issues may also be indicated by voice quality differences (e.g., hoarse, scratchy, breathy voice, or nasalized speech), many speech flow disruptions such as pauses, repetitions, and fillers (e.g., overusing 'huh' 'ehm'), and by gestures replacing speech (e.g., a lot of pointing at objects without talking).

Young children typically use what is called "phonological processes", such as substituting, omitting and repeating sounds in words, but by age 4 or 5 there are normally a lot fewer of these. A somewhat older child with phonological (speech sound) delay sounds younger than their actual age and may say *pid* for 'pig' or *jemon for 'lemon'*, while one with an articulation disorder will have considerable trouble coordinating the tongue, teeth, lips, and/or the roof of the mouth, thus heavily distorting or omitting speech sounds; a few distortions of speech sounds are considered typical, however, even at ages 5-7, depending on the language and word contexts.

A phonological delay may in fact be due to a phonological disorder (also called speech sound disorder), which consists of an inability to learn predictable rules that determine sequences of speech sounds in a child's language(s), thus affecting speech production. An example of speech in inconsistent deviant phonological disorder would show word variation and inconsistency during repetitions, e.g., 'spider' may be said as *pider, fider, sider, thider,* and *ider*.

Speech sound disorders may show up across a spectrum of disorders with overlapping characteristics. For instance, in Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS) children have an expressive language delay, use inconsistent speech sound mismatches, voicing errors, and frequent inappropriate stress patterns in words and phrases, show a lengthened or disrupted ability in articulating sequences of speech sounds, and have challenges with social aspects of language use.

Children with neurological disorders often show up with speech and language disorders. For instance, you might find indications of Down syndrome in a child's limited speaking skills and unintelligibility that result from disturbances in articulation, fluency, voice, resonance (amplification of speech), and prosody (patterns of stress, intonation, and rhythm in speech). Clear evidence of such influences can also be observed in children's limited social language skills in everyday interactions. In another example, children with autism spectrum disorder talk very little, if at all. Their speech tends to be singsong-like or robotic and is mostly unintelligible. They also struggle to understand and use gestures, words, express feelings, follow directions, and engage in tasks in which the child needs to take turns with an adult

Language disability				**Learning disability**
Speech		*Language*		*Learning*
Speech Sound Disorder		Language Delay	Developmental Language Disorder	Specific Learning Disability
organic (known causes)	functional (unknown causes)			dyslexia; written expression disorder; dyscalculia; dysgraphia
problems with movement, anatomical deficits, hearing/ sensory impairment	atypical voice quality/pitch, excessive or persistent dysfluency	delay compared to same-aged peers	prevalent and persistent difficulties understanding others and in speaking	persistent difficulties with reading, writing, translating thoughts into written words, spelling, and/or doing mathematical calculations

Table 1
Characteristics of language and learning disabilities

or a peer during play and conversation. (for instance, in taking turns to stacking blocks or rolling a ball back and forth). As a result, these children exhibit challenging behavioral patterns as a means to communicate, such as being overly aggressive, emotional, scared, loud, or excessively reticent and depressed.

Signs of language difficulty and related learning disabilities in somewhat older children may show up as challenges with reading, writing, counting, and/or planning, impulsive behavior, hyperactivity, lack of eye-hand coordination, difficulty telling time, difficulty telling left from right, problem-solving problems, short attention span, and poor memory. This is further discussed in the next section.

Language difficulties or learning disabilities?

This section describes the main characteristics of language- and learning-related disability to facilitate better differentiation of language difficulties that are not pathological. The types of language- and learning-related disability are summarized in Table 1 and explained below.

Speech sound disorders (another umbrella term for 'phonological disorders') refers to difficulties children have with perceiving and producing speech sounds. Organic speech sound disorder is related to physiology. It is caused by underlying neurological causes, problems with movement (as in dysarthria and childhood apraxia of speech), structural causes (cleft/lip palate, orofacial anomalies, etc.), or sensory/perceptual causes (hearing impairments). When the cause is unknown or not directly linked to a physiological cause, we speak of a functional speech sound disorder. Children with speech sound disorders form a heterogeneous group. They may simultaneously present with several other disorder types, such as disorders affecting voice quality or pitch, or speech fluency (stuttering).

A language delay that does not resolve by age three may persist into adulthood. It may run in the family. It is a disability in its own right, but it is also diagnosed as an additional type of disorder in children with autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, sensory impairment, or traumatic brain injury.

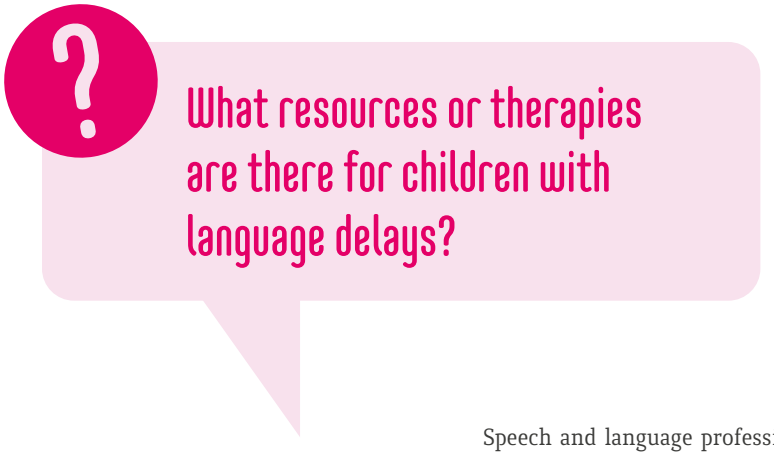
Developmental Language Disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder affecting the comprehension or production of spoken language across different levels (e.g., sentence structure, word structure, and using language in communicative ways). It can be observed early.

Specific learning disability is a communication disorder that affects the capacity to think, speak, write, spell, and do mathematical calculations. Five to fifteen percent of children are affected. The psychological processes associated with learning disability relate to challenges in taking up language input (auditory and visual perception), integrating that input (sequencing, abstraction, and organization), using memory (working, short-, long-term), using output (expression), and using motor skills (fine/gross). Specific learning disability does not result from visual, hearing, motor, emotional, or intellectual disabilities or economic, environmental, or cultural disadvantages. Specific types of learning disability are dyslexia (affecting reading comprehension, word recognition, spelling, speaking, and writing; read more about dyslexia in Witko's article in this volume), written expression disorder (challenges with expressing thoughts in writing), dyscalculia (difficulty with numbers/mathematics as, for instance, when a child has difficulty with counting, keeping track of items, or recognizing even small quantities without counting), and dysgraphia (a neurological disorder affecting fine motor skills and handwriting as, for instance, when a child cannot stay between lines when writing or when writing/drawing is slow, difficult to read, and even painful).

How can I foster strong communication skills in children with communication disorders?

Resources, therapies, and fostering strong communication skills

Caregivers play an instrumental role in supporting children's development, in identifying language and communication difficulties early on, and in seeking formal screening and assessment by speech/language pathologists. Early signs of potential communication disorders may not actually indicate disorders. However, early identification, and disorder diagnosis, are of fundamental importance for facilitating likely long-term positive outcomes of therapy. Intervention practices depend on the type of disorder and are determined by professionals, but caregivers and families are often integral to the process. Parental strategies that facilitate a family environment where children are respected, loved, and positively encouraged to grow and learn are crucial for fostering strong communication skills and a growth mindset in children with communication disorders. Kind, safe, trusting, and supportive surroundings that help sustain meaningful relationships with parents/caregivers, siblings, peers and others, together with proper nutrition, play, exercise, and rest are fundamental primary considerations, as is the case for all children. Positive parenting strategies are age-, context-, and culture-specific (CDC, n.d.). Children seen as having a growth mindset (as opposed to lacking the ability to learn and grow) will show progress and keep learning despite challenges.



Speech and language professionals have developed specific concepts and procedures that can be integrated as practices into children's daily activities. At a basic level, these procedures start with creating predictable spaces and routines, respecting children's interests, diverting children's attention to appropriate behavior, creating opportunities for moving and exploring, helping children be independent and cooperate with requests, and seeking to optimize and uncover their learning potential. Specific strategies may involve:

i) social object play (using objects to encourage interaction),
ii) practicing joint attention (e.g., taking turns in activities),
iii) following children's leads, such as joining children when you see them engaging in their favorite activity, or allowing children to open the door and walk in first,
iv) visual cues to encourage children's choice-making rather than directing them,
v) sharing books (linking pictures/words to events),
vi) peer-mediated support to teach social skills (e.g., giving compliment/praise),
vii) narrating on-going action to improve language experience (using high-pitch and intonation, being detailed and specific, counting, talking about shapes, sizes, past/future events, and thoughts/feeling),
viii) exchanges of appreciation that foster social awareness and relationship skills, and
ix) encouraging children to express thoughts/feelings.

Lastly, a consistent effort to increase people's awareness, sensitivity, and support beyond the family is also important. This means that community programs, resources, and services should be supportive of parents' and families' attempts to become better informed and to allow the respectful and smooth integration of children with communicative disorders in public activities. To this end, several free online resources are available (see references).

Conclusion

This article has outlined the essentials of child communication disorders for parents. It has responded to questions related to red flags for potential communication disorders and common signs of language delay or disorder, and it has provided guidelines that help differentiate between language and learning difficulties, as well as advice on how to foster strong

communication skills in children with communication disorders, and resources/therapies for children with language delays. While communication disorders comprise several types of disorders, the ability to identify risk factors and early signs is very significant for early diagnosis by professionals that can lead to appropriate treatments. While the article has aimed to be informative, there has been no intention to alarm parents and caregivers. Several signs that may appear as indicative of communicative disorder may be false alarms. Caregivers and parents are instrumental in fostering optimal communication practices, learning opportunities, and positive family environments for their children, however, for children with communication disorders, formal diagnoses and therapy lie in the hands of trained professionals.

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Tema

EST-CE QUE LES ENFANTS QUI ENTENDENT PLUSIEURS LANGUES À LA MAISON SONT DAVANTAGE SUSCEPTIBLES DE DÉVELOPPER UNE DYSLEXIE ?

Entre septembre et décembre 2023, Babylonia a recueilli des questions posées par des parents sur le développement du langage de leurs enfants. Cet article vise à répondre à la question suivante :

– Est-ce que les enfants qui entendent plusieurs langues à la maison sont davantage susceptibles de développer une dyslexie ?

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Quand plusieurs langues sont à la fois entendues et utilisées à la maison, les termes de bilinguisme ou plurilinguisme familial sont employés, avec l'idée que les membres de la famille ont la capacité de produire et de comprendre régulièrement des messages dans au moins deux langues. Dans la littérature internationale, le constat est sans appel : le bilinguisme n'est pas un phénomène unitaire, ce qui signifie que la recherche doit prendre en compte de nombreux phénomènes de variation. En acquisition du langage, des facteurs de différenciation individuelle (ID) sont identifiés sur trois niveaux : des facteurs internes à l'enfant (âge de début d'acquisition, habiletés cognitives, bien être socio-émotionnel), des facteurs proximaux (exposition cumulative à la langue d'héritage (L1) et à la deuxième langue acquise (L2), usages en famille de L1 et L2, richesse de l'environnement en L1 et L2), et enfin des facteurs distaux (éducation et littératie en L1, maîtrise de la L1 par les parents, niveau socio-économique de la famille, attitudes et identité de la famille vis-à-vis des langues (Paradis, 2023) . Concernant la dyslexie, c'est le trouble des apprentissages le plus courant, qui touche de surcroit au développement du langage, dans sa dimension d'alphabétisation. Aussi, les parents d'enfants bilingues ou plurilingues peuvent se questionner sur les liens entre l'acquisition du langage, l'apprentissage de plusieurs langues à l'oral et à l'écrit et le risque de développer une dyslexie. Dans les travaux scientifiques sur les troubles de la lecture, les facteurs mentionnés touchent également aux langues elles-mêmes, entre autres, les rapports entre langue orale et langue écrite, les caractéristiques des systèmes d'écriture, et les enjeux de la bilittéracie selon les communautés.

Le fait d'entendre plusieurs langues au sein de la cellule familiale peut correspondre à des situations très différentes. Cela dit, pour chacune des langues, il est essentiel de mesurer l'exposition quantitative et qualitative de l'enfant, de comprendre comment celui-ci est stimulé par les usages linguistiques en famille

(ou « *home language* » dans la littérature anglophone), et quelle est la richesse de l'environnement langagier dans lequel il évolue. En plus de ces renseignements externes à l'enfant, l'âge de début d'acquisition des langues choisi par ses parents est un critère déterminant pour la suite de la trajectoire bilingue et pour l'alphabétisation. Dans une littérature populaire, des stratégies sont décrites, par exemple, « un parent/une langue », ou bien « un lieu/une langue », ou encore « un contexte/une langue », sans pour autant garantir une acquisition réussie dans les deux langues (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013). En effet, on sait aussi que de nombreux parents parlent deux langues à leurs enfants, dans des contextes très variés, et selon des modalités d'usage conversationnel plus ou moins équilibrées en expression ou en compréhension. En prenant appui sur des étapes délimitées dans l'enfance, trois profils sont décrits pour le devenir bilingue (De Houwer, 2021, voir aussi des exemples concrets dans la contribution à ce volume de Simona Montanari) : (1) dès la naissance, l'enfant entend et apprend deux langues simultanément, il n'a pas d'expérience du monolinguisme, c'est l'acquisition naturelle de deux langues simultanément (2L1) ; (2) l'enfant entend et apprend d'abord une seule langue, puis très précocement, dès l'âge de 2 ans, et avant 6 ans, l'enfant apprend une seconde langue, parfois à la garderie ou à la maternelle, alors que sa première langue est encore en développement, c'est l'acquisition séquentielle précoce d'une seconde langue (L1-L2P) ; (3) entre l'âge de 6 et 11 ans, l'enfant scolarisé à cette époque à l'école primaire, prend appui sur une L1 pratiquée depuis plus longtemps que la L2, pour apprendre une seconde langue, c'est l'acquisition séquentielle différée d'une seconde langue (L1-L2). Ces trois étapes sont pertinentes pour rappeler que les données de la recherche donnent des avantages aux bilingues simultanés par rapport aux bilingues séquentiels en termes d'accent, et de langue orale (vocabulaire plus diversifié, compétences grammaticales plus élevées et traitement du langage en temps réel plus performant (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013). Concernant les autres profils, les auteurs rapportent que les avantages sociolinguistiques font consensus, alors qu'il y a des débats concernant les avantages bilingues pour les compétences en compréhension sociale, ou pour certaines capacités cognitives : le fait que la conscience phonologique pour manipuler les sons ou les signes graphiques serait stimulée dans plusieurs langues, ou que les fonctions exécutives de flexibilité et d'inhibition seraient plus compétitives grâce à l'entrainement régulier pour passer d'une langue à une autre. Ces éléments sont essentiels pour le développement du langage écrit qui va nous intéresser dans notre seconde question. Pour terminer sur notre vision globale du bilinguisme et les différentes circonstances pour entendre plusieurs langues, quel que soit son profil d'acquisition bilingue, un enfant reçoit un enseignement scolaire, monolingue ou bilingue selon les possibilités et le choix de la famille. Parfois un enseignement monolingue dans une des langues est complété par des cours dans l'autre langue, sur décision des parents qui en assument le coût par intérêt pour l'enfant et la famille. L'importance du contexte d'enseignement dans lesquels les enfants deviennent bilingues et apprennent à lire est à souligner, et notamment le rôle de la langue de scolarisation si l'enseignement est monolingue. Enfin, cet enfant qui grandit est socialisé dans des environnements divers où il peut pratiquer différentes langues par nécessité ou par choix selon les contextes et selon ses préférences, avec des opportunités pour utiliser l'écrit.

Pour revenir au langage écrit, l'alphabétisation n'est pas un processus nécessaire pour connaître et profiter d'une langue. L'histoire des langues montre que, partout dans le monde, des personnes parlent très bien des langues, mais ne les écrivent pas. Cependant, dans certaines cultures, la littérature et les médias visuels ont recours à l'écrit. C'est pourquoi, aux alentours de ses 6 ans, l'enfant sera nourri socialement et scolairement pour passer du langage oral au langage écrit. Apprendre à lire dans n'importe quelles langues nécessite d'apprendre à faire la correspondance entre l'écrit, le son et le sens (voir la réponse de Janice Nakamura sur les pratiques de littéracie). Dans cette situation, est-ce que le fait de construire le langage dans plusieurs langues est un obstacle ou un atout ? Pour argumenter sur cette question cruciale, Bialystok et al. (2005) considèrent trois facteurs à prendre en compte dans l'apprentissage de la lecture d'un enfant bilingue : d'abord la structure des langues que cet enfant

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Est-ce que les enfants qui entendent plusieurs langues à la maison sont davantage susceptibles de développer une dyslexie ?

pratique, deuxièmement, sa maîtrise des différentes langues, et troisièmement, les expériences pédagogiques avec les différents systèmes d'écriture. Les variations entre les langues du monde et leurs systèmes d'écriture sont extrêmement complexes et concernent différentes caractéristiques : les types d'unités (sons, tons, lettres, caractères, syllabes), le degré de correspondances entre les unités sonores et graphiques, la complexité visuelle des signes graphiques plus importante par exemple dans les syllabaires du chinois que dans l'alphabet finnois (Perfetti et Helder, 2022). Par conséquent, les transferts de capacités linguistiques d'une langue à une autre sont visibles pour des langues apparentées, elles sont décrites notamment pour les langues alphabétiques. Les facteurs favorables au développement du langage écrit dans ces langues concernent prioritairement de bonnes compétences en conscience phonologique, une bonne connaissance du nom des lettres et des capacités correctes de dénomination rapide automatisée. Pour les langues non alphabétiques, de récentes recherches pour le chinois en particulier, examinent des mesures comportementales couvrant les compétences phonologiques, orthographiques, morphologiques, visuo-attentionnelles, visuo-motrices et les capacités de mémoire de travail car aucun facteur unique n'a été identifié à ce jour comme prédominant pour l'apprentissage de ce système d'écriture.

Pour répondre à la question des risques de développer un trouble de la lecture liée à l'acquisition bilingue, il faut rappeler que la dyslexie touche à l'équipement neurocognitif individuel dont dispose un enfant bilingue pour apprendre à lire et développer son expérience en lecture, qu'il soit 2L1, L1-L2P, L1-L2. Il apparaît que les manifestations des problèmes de lecture des mots, y compris la dyslexie, peuvent varier en fonction de l'âge, et en fonction de la manière dont le système d'écriture sollicite la phonologie (Perfetti et Helder, 2022). De plus, compte tenu des facteurs de différentiation individuels précédemment exposés, un enfant bilingue peut additionner les avantages, par exemple, s'il a appris précocement et simultanément deux langues, avec des systèmes écrits proches, s'il bénéficie d'un « *home language* » constructif, d'un niveau socio-économique ordinaire ou supérieur, et d'un quotient intellectuel dans la norme, garantissant une conscience phonologique fonctionnelle, une mémoire de travail correcte, et une mémoire auditivo-verbale correcte. À l'inverse, un enfant peut cumuler des facteurs de contraintes, tels qu'un apprentissage séquentiel déséquilibré en termes d'exposition à ses différentes langues, des langues avec des systèmes écrits différents, un « *home language* » plus ou moins préservé, un niveau socio-économique faible, et un quotient intellectuel moyen faible. Dans cette situation, l'acquisition du langage bilingue doit relever un certain nombre de défis neurocognitifs et socio-culturels. Entre ces deux situations opposées, chaque biographie langagière pourra révéler des aspects particuliers du parcours d'un enfant engagé dans l'acquisition bilingue du langage. Toutefois, la littérature montre que si l'âge et les conditions de scolarisation sont conformes à un cadre pédagogique ordinaire, le développement de la lecture est considéré comme équivalent chez les enfants monolingues ou bilingues simultanés. Pour les bilingues séquentiels

pratiquant des langues alphabétiques, le processus cognitif de décodage se transfert avec l'appui des mécanismes similaires de conscience phonologique, conversion lettres-sons et dénomination rapide automatisée. Dans ce cas particulier, l'enfant n'aurait pas besoin de réapprendre les processus de base quand il a appris à lire dans l'une des langues.

En cas de développement du langage avec plus d'une langue, si les parents ne sont pas à l'aise ou se posent des questions sur l'apprentissage de la lecture, une évaluation par un.e orthophoniste ou logopède formé.e au bi-plurilinguisme sera nécessaire pour évaluer les besoins de l'enfant. Dans cette éventualité, quelques recommandations sont à considérer : 1) établir une biographie langagière la plus exhaustive possible, avec notamment une information sur l'âge d'acquisition des langues, des mesures de l'exposition quantitative et cumulative dans chaque langue, et un inventaire des systèmes linguistiques manipulés par l'enfant à l'oral et à l'écrit, 2) vérifier les capacités d'un apprentissage possible et réussi de la lecture selon les systèmes linguistiques ; 3) tenir compte du vécu familial sociolinguistique, parfois compliqué, sans jugement, et en gardant en tête que les langues ne bénéficient pas toutes du même prestige et de la même valeur sociale, mais que même une langue minoritaire remplit une fonction identitaire ; 4) ne pas sous-estimer le rôle de la première langue acquise, car apprendre à lire dans une langue que l'on connaît déjà est un vrai point d'appui neurocognitif et linguistique ; 5) surveiller l'apprentissage de la lecture dans la langue dans laquelle l'enfant ne reçoit pas un enseignement explicite et progressif, car celui-ci est nécessaire pour comprendre les bases d'un système d'écriture ; 6) rappeler l'importance des méthodes pédagogiques proposées à l'enfant et le temps nécessaire pour intégrer les compétences linguistiques académiques (vocabulaire, grammaire, discours), en fonction d'une potentielle dominance d'une des langues ; et enfin, 7) admettre que l'enfant engagé dans l'apprentissage concomitant de plus d'une langue, à l'oral et à l'écrit, doit gérer une quantité d'informations considérable. Face à cette question développementale et humaine, la recherche est un appui nécessaire pour mieux comprendre les particularités de l'apprentissage de la lecture en cas de bilinguisme, et pour documenter de manière fiable l'universalité du développement de la lecture et ses variations selon les langues et les systèmes d'écriture spécifiques (Perfetti et Helder, 2022).

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ACCENT AND SPEECH SOUNDS IN BILINGUAL CHILDREN

Tema

Between September and December 2023, Babylonia collected questions from parents regarding their children's language development. This article aims to answer the following questions about foreign accent in children and speech sound errors.

– Hello, I'm French and I live in the United States. My 8-year-old son speaks French and English. Since he was very little, he has spoken French with a slight American accent. This has always surprised me, because he's not surrounded by French-speaking Americans. I thought the accent was something you picked up "by ear "*! Is it actually linked to the physiognomy of the mouth?

***For example, one year he had a Romanian teacher at school. And for the first few days, he'd come home speaking French with a Romanian accent! [this is the English version of a question originally asked in French]**

– How can I address speech sound errors or articulation difficulties?

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The first question I would like to answer in this contribution presents the interesting case of an eight-year-old boy who lives in the United States and who speaks French with an American accent, although he has only ever heard French spoken by his mother who is a native speaker of French. Where indeed does the American accent in his French come from?

First, it is important to define what a foreign accent is. We may perceive a foreign accent when someone does not sound like a person who learned that language as their only language. Flege (1981) referred to differences in pronunciation between native and non-native speakers when defining accent; only the latter group have an accent. However, we will avoid the terms native versus non-native speech because these terms are difficult to define and may be associated with a "deficit view" of second language learning. Perception of a foreign accent may come from a variety of factors that include mispronunciations of sounds. A German speaker of English may say "I tink so" instead of "I think so" because he/she is unable to say the "th" sound of English, a sound that does not occur in German. Perception of a foreign accent may also come about from prosodic differences. Prosody refers to variations in loudness, pitch, and timing that create differences in the rhythm and in the melody of speech. English has different prosody to French. English gives greater emphasis to the first syllable of a word (it is louder, longer and has a higher pitch than the other syllables) whereas French gives greater emphasis to the last syllable of a word. An English speaker of French may sound like he/she has an accent because the speaker puts emphasis on different syllables to what a French speaker would (i.e., first syllable rather than last syllable). Many studies have been conducted on adult speakers acquiring a foreign or second language. It is generally acknowledged that adults have great difficulty ridding themselves of a foreign accent, whereas children acquiring their languages at a young age do

Hello, I'm French and I live in the United States. My 8-year-old son speaks French and English. Since he was very little, he has spoken French with a slight American accent. This has always surprised me, because he's not surrounded by French-speaking Americans. I thought the accent was something you picked up "by ear"! Is it actually linked to the physiognomy of the mouth?

not display evidence of foreign accents. There are two sets of studies, however, which contradict this generalization.

One set of studies has shown that children may speak the majority (and minority) languages that they are acquiring with a "foreign accent" because they are exposed to the speech of their parents who speak these languages also with a foreign accent. By "majority" language, I refer to the language of the broader society and by "minority" language, I refer to the language spoken by parents in the home which is not the same as the societal language. For example, in a study on the acquisition of Voice Onset Time (VOT), Stoehr et al. (2019) found that the VOT patterns of German-Dutch bilinguals (Dutch being the majority language), aged three to six years, were closely related to those of their parents. First of all, what is VOT? It refers to the time period between the start of voicing (vibration in the voice box) and the start of articulation (movements of the tongue and lips in the mouth). It helps to distinguish sounds such as /b, d, g/ from sounds such as /p, t, k/. Language differ in their VOT values. German, for example, has different VOT values to Dutch. Stoehr et al. (2019) measured the VOTs of the bilingual children's mothers who had learned German from early childhood and who had moved to the Netherlands before their children were born. They found that the mothers spoke Dutch with VOT values that were not Dutch-like but they also produced German with VOT values that were different from Germans who had lived all their lives in Germany and spoke only German. That is, their German VOTs had become more Dutch-like, possibly because of the restricted use of their German in the Netherlands. The process in which a speaker loses proficiency in language is called "attrition". Thus, the bilingual children's VOT values were affected by their mothers' accented Dutch and by their mothers' "attrited" speech in German. Stoehr et al. (2019) did not refer to the bilingual children as having "foreign accents", but differences in VOT values are often associated with the perception of a foreign accent (Flege, 1981).

Returning to the case of the bilingual French-English child living in the United States, his accented French may indeed come from the speech input of the mother who unconsciously has started to speak French with an American accent.

A second set of studies shows that accented speech may be the result of cross-linguistic interaction. Cross-linguistic interaction refers to the influence of one language upon another, resulting

How can I address speech sound errors or articulation difficulties?

in differences in a bilingual's speech in comparison to a monolingual's. The comparison of bilingual with monolingual speech should not in any way infer that monolingual speech is the standard or norm, but it is a way to determine if linguistic changes occur due to being bilingual. Cross-linguistic interaction has been studied in many different language domains including those referring to sounds (phonetics and phonology), words and their meanings (lexico-semantics), and sentence structure (syntax). In the area of phonetics and phonology, several studies have documented cross-linguistic interaction in the production of speech sounds and in prosody (Kehoe, 2015). The bilingual French-English child in the abstract may produce French using an English /r/, that is, an /r/ produced with the tongue tip in the centre or towards the front of the mouth, rather than a French /r/ with the back of the tongue against the back of the mouth. He may produce vowels in a different way than French speakers, making the vowel longer and with a slightly different quality similar to how the vowel is pronounced in English (French /o/ "eau" said with English pronunciation "ow" as in "snow"). He may speak French with different prosody to that of a French speaker (see above), giving greater emphasis to the first rather than to the last syllable of a word. These examples of transfer from English to French would give the impression of a foreign accent in French. This child may be particularly susceptible to having a foreign accent because he is dominant in English. He lives in an English-speaking environment and he probably hears, proportion-wise, a greater amount of English than French. It should be noted that transfer of phonetic/phonological features from one language to another is not common in young children exposed to two languages from birth. However, there is a great deal of individual variation and some bilinguals have been observed to display high degrees of transfer (Kehoe, 2015).

In sum, I have offered two possible but not mutually exclusive explanations for the bilingual French-English child's accented French. He may speak French with a foreign accent because he receives input from his native French-speaking mother whose speech exhibits attrition. That is, her French has started to be become more (American) English-sounding. He may also produce French with English phonetic features, due to the transfer of phonetic features from English to French, a phenomenon referred to as cross-linguistic interaction. Transfer effects may arise because he lives in an English-speaking community and is likely dominant in English.

Speech sound errors or articulation difficulties

The second question in this contribution asks how to address speech sound errors or articulation difficulties. The writer does not specify whether she is referring to bilingual or monolingual children. In the spirit of this forum, I will refer to both groups of children.

All children at the age of two to three years make speech sound errors. They exhibit phonological simplifications such as omitting sounds at the ends of words (e.g., "dog" -> "do") or omitting sounds within consonant sequences (e.g., "brush" -> "bush"). These simplifications influence speech intelligibility. Two-year-old children are intelligible 70% of the time whereas three-year-old children are intelligible 80% of the time. Four-year-old children are intelligible most of the time; however, they may still have difficulty pronouncing late-acquired sounds such as /ʃ/ (the first sound in "shoe") and /ʒ/ (the middle sound in "measure") and they may omit sounds in multisyllabic words (e.g., "hippopotamus" -> "hipotmus"). Between the age of four to seven years, these speech-sound difficulties resolve and most six to seven-year olds don't present with speech sound errors. If a child displays some phonological simplifications at two to three years of age and some errors on isolated sounds at four to five years, there may be no need for

concern. Parents should give good speech input to their children, always providing the phonologically correct model and, if possible, providing several models in a row (e.g., Child: That is a "do"; Mother: Yes, that is a "DOG" and here is a big "DOG" and, over there, is a little "DOG") and over time, these errors should resolve. Modeling correct pronunciation is a more effective and natural approach than correcting your child's pronunciation all the time, which may lead to frustration and interfere with the flow of conversation.

Some children may continue to display phonological simplifications beyond the age of two to three years. They may make errors not only on late-acquired sounds but on sounds that are acquired at an early age (e.g., errors on "k" and "g"). They may exhibit processes not seen in typical development such as omitting sounds at the beginning rather than at the ends of words. Their speech may be subject to great variability and be intelligible only 50% of the time. These children may be diagnosed as having a speech sound disorder by a speech-language therapist. A speech sound disorder is a childhood communication impairment involving difficulty with the perception, motor production (articulation) and/or phonological representation of speech which impacts speech intelligibility. Speech sound disorders are present in 7-10% of children. Numerous studies attest to the fact that speech sound disorders may have long-term negative consequences on a child's social-emotional, educational, and professional development. Even the presence of a mild disorder (e.g., misarticulation of "s" or "r", often referred to as a "lisp") may significantly influence a child's social interactions and interpersonal relations. Thus, it is important that parents seek the advice of a speech-language therapist if they have any concerns about their child's speech sound development (for more details about this, please read the contribution by Agnès Witko in this issue).

The discussion above refers to children in general, but what happens if your child is bilingual? Many studies have compared the speech sound acquisition of bilingual and monolingual children (Amengual, 2024). The findings generally show no major differences in the speech development of bilingual and monolingual children. Bilinguals may perform better, less well, or similarly to monolingual children. Nevertheless, several studies report qualitative differences between bilinguals and monolinguals in their speech sound acquisition and greater variability in bilingual speech patterns. As discussed above, bilinguals may display evidence of cross-linguistic interaction in their speech (not possible in monolinguals). For example, a bilingual German-English child may produce the English /r/ as a German /r/. That is, the child may produce /r/ with the back of the tongue against the back of the mouth rather than with the tip of the tongue in the centre or towards the front of the mouth as in English (these are the main ways to produce /r/ in German and English; however, there is considerable variation in how /r/ is produced across dialects and individuals speakers). The mispronunciation of /r/ is not a speech sound error as such but is an example of the influence of German phonetics on English. In general, cross-linguistic interaction is a transient period in a bilingual child's phonological development (Kehoe, 2015).

The presence of speech sound "errors" in bilingual children due to cross-linguistic interaction complicates the diagnostic process for speech-language therapists. In a speech evaluation, the therapist needs to separate those sound differences due to cross-linguistic interaction from those due to a true speech sound disorder. In such a situation, the speech-language therapist needs to conduct a contrastive analysis, which involves taking into consideration the sound structures of the languages the child is acquiring to eliminate those errors which could potentially be due to cross-linguistic interaction. For example, Preston & Seki (2011) did not consider substitutions of /l/ and /r/ as errors in the English of a Japanese-English bilingual child with a speech sound disorder because /l/ and /r/ are not sounds in Japanese (or at least they are not phonetically similar to those in English). They did, however, consider substitutions of "s" and "sh" (the first sounds in "Sue" and "shoe") as being errors due to a speech sound disorder. Such substitutions were present in both Japanese and English and were highly inconsistent. They are also errors commonly seen in monolingual Japanese and English-speaking children with speech sound disorders. Thus, an understanding of the speech patterns that could be plausibly related to a child learning a second language is important for a speech-language therapist to diagnose speech sound disorders in bilingual children.

In sum, bilingual or monolingual children who present with a considerable numbers of speech sound errors should be seen by a speech-language therapist in order to determine whether their errors are developmentally appropriate, reflect a speech sound disorder, or, in the case of bilingual children, are due to cross-linguistic interaction. If a child is diagnosed with a speech sound disorder, an individually-tailored speech intervention will be set up which puts emphasis on phonological or motoric aspects of speech production, and on the perception of speech sounds. Such interventions are generally effective in remediating speech sound errors.

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Tema

LINGUISTIC DISCRIMINATION OF HERITAGE LANGUAGE SPEAKING CHILDREN: WHY DOES IT HAPPEN AND HOW CAN PARENTS TACKLE IT?

Between September and December 2023, Babylonia collected questions from parents regarding their children's language development. This article aims to answer the following questions:

- **It is 2024: why does our society still discriminate so strongly against certain languages and dialects? A Tigrinya-speaking child receives little appreciation from educational institutions compared to an English-speaking child. What are we still doing wrong? Who is most responsible for this inequality? How could these asymmetries be reduced as soon as possible? Why are decision-makers not interested in changing this?**
- **People always say that we should cultivate children's native/first languages. However, our family language is not welcome at school as part of the regular timetable, i.e., it is not promoted – isn't this institutional discrimination? Why is this not (yet) being discussed in Switzerland? Is linguicism not an issue?**

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Around the world, many parents raise their children multilingually, hoping that they will eventually become proficient and active users of all their languages. However, parents' multilingual child-rearing experiences – and often also their outcomes – are shaped strongly by the languages that are being transmitted. Specifically, there are systematic differences between parents transmitting multiple dominant societal languages (e.g., French and English in Quebec) compared to parents transmitting heritage languages. *Heritage languages* (henceforth: HLs) are languages other than the dominant societal language(s) in a given context, and a distinction can be made between *Indigenous HLs*, which are native to a region but have been minoritised (e.g., Māori in New Zealand, or North Frisian in Germany), and *immigrant HLs*, which are spoken by a society's minority population with a migration background (e.g., Tigrinya in Switzerland, or Tagalog in Japan). Differences certainly exist in the societal treatment of Indigenous versus immigrant HL-transmitting parents. However, the main point here is that both types of HL-transmitting parents systematically experience more linguistic discrimination than their non-HL-transmitting counterparts – and the same also applies to their children. For instance, parents generally receive little respect and recognition for transmitting HLs, and they often get told to only speak the dominant language(s) of the society they live in. Children, as they get older, commonly have little or no school support for their HL development, and they frequently get mocked for using their HLs. This happens even when children are raised multilingually with dominant societal languages in addition to their HLs. But what is the root cause of such linguistic discrimination, what consequences does it have, and what can be done about it?

The reason for linguistic discrimination lies in people's language attitudes

Simply put, *language attitudes* are systematic beliefs that people hold about languages, language varieties (e.g., accents

and dialects), and linguistic phenomena (e.g., multilingualism and language mixing). Everyone has language attitudes, but no-one is born with them: they are socially constructed and learned from experience, usually early on in life. They can be influenced by caregivers, friends, neighbours, online acquaintances, and other people; shaped by the media, educational institutions, and the government; and transmitted explicitly or in very subtle ways. Importantly, people's language attitudes are always linked with their attitudes towards the *users* of the languages, language varieties, and linguistic phenomena in question. This is because language functions as a symbol of its users' social identities. It reveals – or it is at least perceived to reveal – what social groups someone belongs to: for instance, whether they are part of the societal majority or some kind of minority, what their social class is, what occupational group they belong to, and whether they are part of a monolingual or a multilingual community. There are two key cognitive processes that account for this: categorisation and stereotyping. When people first encounter someone new, they use that person's language cues to make inferences about their social group membership(s) – that is, they categorise them; and then they attribute to the new person all the traits that are stereotypically associated with their inferred social group(s). Language is thus used as a key way of dividing the social world – and from a fairly early age, people are conditioned to hold (1) a preference for members of prestigious, high-status social groups, as well as (2) a preference for anyone who is a member of their own social group(s), a phenomenon referred to as *ingroup favouritism*. Since people's attitudes bias their social interactions, these two preferences entail that people are much more likely to discriminate (1) against anyone who uses languages, language varieties or linguistic phenomena that are associated with low-status groups, as well as (2) against anyone whom they perceive as an outgroup member. Consequently, language users who are perceived to be members of low-status groups and/or outgroup members commonly face stigmatisation, challenges, and barriers in many spheres of their lives – including education, employment, the search for housing, and even judicial settings. Notably, speakers of dominant societal majority languages tend to perceive HL speakers as both: members of low-status groups *and* outgroup members. This can further amplify the disadvantages that HL speakers experience. *The information in this paragraph is taken from Kircher and Zipp (2022), where a more detailed discussion of the literature on language attitudes, their formation, and their consequences can be found.*

The extent of the denigration that HL speakers experience depends on their specific HLs and on the stereotypes these HLs are associated with. The latter can vary between language communities. (For instance, Spanish as a HL is commonly perceived very negatively by non-Spanish-speakers in the United States. This is linked to widespread raciolinguistic ideologies as well as the common association of Spanish with illegal immigration across the Mexican border. By contrast, in most European contexts, Spanish is viewed much more positively: it is seen as a beautiful language with high utilitarian value that facilitates travel and international communication. Such differences highlight that language attitudes do not indicate linguistic or aesthetic quality per se, but are instead contingent upon the social connotations that languages hold in different communities.) Relatedly, different kinds of

It is 2024: why does our society still discriminate so strongly against certain languages and dialects? A Tigrinya-speaking child receives little appreciation from educational institutions compared to an English-speaking child. What are we still doing wrong? Who is most responsible for this inequality? How could these asymmetries be reduced as soon as possible? Why are decision-makers not interested in changing this?

People always say that we should cultivate children's native/first languages. However, our family language is not welcome at school as part of the regular timetable, i.e., it is not promoted – isn't this institutional discrimination? Why is this not (yet) being discussed in Switzerland? Is linguicism not an issue?

multilingualism are judged differently. For instance, even though both Tigrinya and English are immigrant HLs in Switzerland, multilingualism involving one or more of the Swiss societal majority languages in combination with Tigrinya is not valued anywhere near as much as multilingualism involving one or more of the Swiss societal majority languages in combination with English. The former is stereotypically associated with precarity and poverty, the latter with prestige and privilege. The term *elite multilingualism* is used to describe the kind of multilingualism that involves 'powerful' languages such as English and Spanish, whose knowledge is deemed very desirable due to its tangible market value – at least in most European contexts. Of course, English is a special case since it is also taught as a subject at school, both across Europe and in many other parts of the world. Its teaching is linked with its tangible market value. Moreover, English is the global lingua franca. It therefore holds a doubly special status, which makes it markedly different from other HLs. Consequently, it is not surprising that children who grow up multilingually with English as one of their languages experience less linguistic discrimination than children who are raised multilingually with other HLs. *The information in this paragraph is largely based on Kircher and Zipp (2022) as well as Barakos and Selleck (2019); the latter provide an excellent introduction to the topic of elite multilingualism, including its connection with broader structural inequalities.*

The consequences of linguistic discrimination can be severe

While parents do not usually hesitate to transmit dominant societal languages to their children, many parents do feel pressured to stop using their HLs with their children in public places, where they can be heard by others – and some parents even cease to transmit their HLs in the home. Further down the line, parents are also less likely to ask for school support for their children's HL development if they feel that it is not socially accepted. All of this reduces the exposure that children receive to their HLs. This, in turn, negatively affects children's language outcomes – because both the quantity and the quality of exposure they receive to each of their languages is essential for their multilingual development. If parents reduce the amount of HL exposure their children receive, and if they do not strive to provide rich and varied language experiences, they are thereby also reducing the likelihood that the children will become active and proficient speakers of these HLs. *Multilingual development is further discussed in the articles by Gathercole and De Houwer in this special issue; Fibla et al. (2022) also provide a comprehensive overview of the relevant research.*

What can parents do to support their children's HL development in the home?

Especially in the early years, a crucial step is to cultivate the home as a domain in which the HL is actively promoted. There are many ways in which parents can achieve this: for instance, by establishing family traditions that are associated with the HL, through shared reading practices to promote HL development, and by encouraging contact with extended family members who can provide additional HL exposure. Ideally, parents should regularly assess how their *family language policies*

(i.e., the ways in which they want to use one or more languages in the home) are working out, making objective appraisals of what language(s) their children are exposed to in their day-to-day lives. Based on these appraisals, family language policies may need to be adapted dynamically to ensure children's adequate HL exposure. *Family language policies are further discussed in this volume in the articles by Gathercole, Montanari, Nakamura and Slavkov; Fibla et al. (2022) and Kircher et al. (2024) also provide more detailed discussions of family language policies and the pivotal role that the home environment plays in HL transmission.*

Notably, in the home, parents are not only able to transmit the HL itself; they also have the opportunity to shape their children's attitudes towards it. As noted above, a child's language attitudes will most likely be influenced not only by their parents but also by numerous other people, as well as by the media, educational institutions, and the government once the child gets older. This may make the promotion of positive attitudes towards the family's HL challenging. Nonetheless, parents should feel heartened by their own agency in this regard. Children's early exposure to the HL will determine their later HL development and whether they are *able* to use it – while children's attitudes towards the HL will influence whether they will actually *want* to use it. Moreover, a child with positive attitudes towards their HL is more likely to withstand linguistic discrimination.

What can parents do to combat institutional linguistic discrimination?

HL-speaking parents and children in many societies would benefit from policies that promote structural changes and provide them with more institutional support. Over time, such policies would also promote the amelioration of attitudes towards HLs and their speakers – and thereby reduce linguistic discrimination at an inter-personal level. As it is always easiest to stick with the status quo, it is unlikely that decision-makers will implement such policies without pressure to do so. However, parents can play a key role in this regard: they are able to use their agency to advocate for change. Advocating for change is a challenging task and parents may find it easier to work towards this goal in groups, together with other like-minded HL-transmitting parents. This also makes it more likely that they will get heard and taken seriously by the relevant decision-makers. The long and turbulent history of language education policies in the Canadian province of Quebec serves as an example of how effective parent pressure groups can be.

Depending on their circumstances, different HL communities will benefit from different policies. Their needs may include paid parental leave so that the primary caregiver(s) can provide adequate HL exposure during infancy; the availability of HL childcare and/or tailored preschool programmes during toddlerhood; the subsidy of institutional activities such as HL storytime at the local library or cultural centre; and, as children get older, HL instruction and other assistance through the school system. *These examples are taken from Fibla et al. (2022), who also provide an overview of other potential policies to support parents who are raising multilingual children with HLs, and who explain how each of these policies can promote children's language development. Throughout, the authors highlight the importance of policies and support measures that are tailored to specific communities.*

Before parents start advocating for policy changes, it is important that they find out what policies are already in place and what opportunities are already available for their children (for example, by requesting this information from school boards and/or education ministries). Sometimes, certain measures simply are not advertised sufficiently and are therefore not on the HL community members' radar. It is also helpful if parents are aware of what the science says about children who grow up multilingually: namely that these children are not at a disadvantage compared to their monolingual peers, they will not be confused by acquiring multiple languages, and their multilingualism will not lead to any delays in their language acquisition process. *Myths and milestones regarding children's multilingual development are the topics of De Houwer's articles in this volume; Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams (2013) also debunk some of the most common myths about childhood multilingualism. Awareness of the facts may help parents stand up to anyone who expresses negative attitudes towards childhood multilingualism.*

Advocating for policy changes is not an easy task – but in the long term, the benefits can be substantial. Structural changes, institutional support, and more positive attitudes towards HLs and their speakers will allow parents to navigate the child-rearing process more easily, without constantly encountering linguistic discrimination. This, in turn, will contribute to the well-being of the parents, the children, and the HL community at large.

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Tema

MYTHS ABOUT BILINGUAL DEVELOPMENT AND WHY THEY HURT

Between September and December 2023, Babylonia collected questions from parents regarding their children's language development. This article aims to answer the following questions:
– What are the most common myths about multilingual parenting?
– What are the advantages and disadvantages of language development in a multilingual environment?

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Introduction

When young children grow up with more than a single language they learn from very early on that the same thing can have different names. They also soon learn to adjust how they speak to the person they are speaking to, that is, they learn to fluently switch between languages depending on who they are talking to. These early experiences are thought to lead to a high degree of cognitive flexibility and language awareness in child bilinguals, both considered advantages for children's academic development. Having sustained early experience with two or three languages is also thought to be an advantage when children start learning a foreign language at school. Of course the main advantage of being bilingual from early on is that you can speak to many more people than if you knew just a single language.

However, children who are raised with multiple languages may also have negative experiences that are linked to their bilingualism. These negative experiences are often the result of people in children's environments being biased against early child bilingualism. Such biases are fixed beliefs that are not supported by actual facts: they are myths. In the so-called Western world and beyond (Genesee, 2015; Turnbull, 2023), such myths have existed for at least 100 years. Solid research on child bilingualism was quite rare before 1995 or so, so there wasn't much scientific evidence that could address common pre-scientific beliefs. Sadly, even though now there is a great deal of solid research on child bilingualism that has debunked most of them (De Houwer, 2009, 2021), many myths persist.

Common myths about early bilingual development and what the research says

(1) "Bilingual children experience delayed language development compared to monolingual peers". Unfortunately this idea is very common. Apart from the

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problem that monolingualism is taken as a standard for bilingualism, the statement is not supported by research. There are no bilingual-monolingual differences in the rate of language development (read De Houwer & Pascall's blog article about it in each of 4 languages; see also the article on Language Development Milestones for Bilingual and Monolingual Children in this volume).

(2) "Children growing up bilingually always use a language mixture". It is true that some of the sentences that bilingual children say may contain words from each language. The use of such "mixed utterances" is very normal for all bilinguals when they speak to people they think will understand them. Amongst others, using mixed utterances is a way of relying on your entire vocabulary to use the word you think fits best. However, so far no bilingual child has been found to use *only* or *mainly* mixed utterances - they represent at most about a third of some children's language use; for most children mixed utterances are an exception. What's more, all children who have grown up with two or more languages from birth are capable of saying sentences in just one single language, without any structural influence from another language. Indeed, being able to do so is an important milestone that most bilingual children have reached by age 3 at the latest (see the article on Language Development Milestones for Bilingual and Monolingual Children in this volume).

(3) Related to myth 2 is the idea that "children growing up with two languages cannot learn any one language well". The millions of bilingual children who are fluent in both or at least one of their languages offer strong counterevidence to this idea.

(4) A myth related to myth 3 is that "children get confused when they are confronted with two languages". For children who have grown up with two or more languages from birth it is perfectly normal to hear two or more languages, and to switch languages depending on who they are talking to or where they are. This ability starts very early in some children (at age 15 months), but is usually in place in two-year-olds. There is no confusion.

(5) Another myth is that "when children hear a language other than the school language at home, this hinders their learning of the school language properly". There is no evidence for this common belief. Bilingual children may have heard two or more languages at home from birth, including the school language. These children have been growing up in a Bilingual First Language Acquisition (BFLA) setting. Often, teachers may not realize that BFLA children know another language besides the school language: that's how well BFLA children, like their monolingual counterparts who have only heard the school language from birth, generally perform in the school language. Other bilingual children may have heard only a non-school language (or two) at home since birth, and the school language only once they attended preschool (in what is called an Early Second Language Acquisition (ESLA) setting) or primary school (in what is called a Second Language Acquisition (SLA) setting). These ESLA and SLA children can learn the new school language faster and better if they have a good foundation in the

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What are the most common myths about multilingual parenting?

non-school language. Their knowledge of the non-school language actually boosts their learning of the school language (review of BFLA, ESLA and SLA in De Houwer, 2021).

(6) A more positively worded myth is that "small children easily pick up two or more languages". However, it is not true that small children easily pick up two or more languages. It takes many years for both bilingual and monolingual children to build up a large vocabulary that will allow them to fluently speak about a range of topics. No adult wants to speak like a six-year-old. The fact that some children are able to soon mimic some words and phrases in a new language (e.g., through vacation with children from diverse backgrounds) doesn't mean they have really learned that language. It takes a lot of learning opportunities and time to really learn a language. Children with fewer learning opportunities take longer. Over the early childhood years and beyond, children cumulatively and slowly learn through active and very frequent, repetitive, interaction with people who speak better than they.

Myths (1) to (6) are about the bilingual development process. There is one pervasive myth that relates to the circumstances in which children become bilingual. This is the myth that "the one person, one language (OPOL) method is the only one that can yield "perfectly" bilingual children". Clearly, though, that is NOT the case. Research has shown that in up to a quarter of families using the OPOL method children speak only a single language, that is, the school language. At the same time, bilingual families using another approach stand a much better chance of having children who speak the two languages heard at home. Those are families where both parents speak the same non-school language at home, and in addition one parent speaks the school language. Families where both parents speak both languages at home have the same (low) chance as OPOL families of having children who actually speak two languages (review in De Houwer, 2009).

How can myths about bilingual development hurt?

Even though there has been an exponential growth in science communication about the research on bilingual development to a wider audience (including to professionals such as speech therapists, doctors, and teachers), the myths persist. Parents may believe in some of them. They are also heard from doctors, speech therapists, educators, and teachers. We read the biases in the media and unfortunately also in some of the academic literature. The reason they persist, even in the face of scientific counterevidence, is likely related to generally negative attitudes towards bilingualism and specific languages (see the article by Kircher on linguistic discrimination in this volume).

The continued existence of non-scientific biases stand in the way of Harmonious Bilingualism for families, that is, for bilingual families' well-being as it relates to language (read more about Harmonious Bilingualism through https://www.habilnet.org). Below are some examples.

(i) Threat to parental well-being

Many parents who believe that speaking two languages to children slows language

development or confuses children will decide to speak only one language at home. Parents whose language is not used will often feel embarrassed towards their own parents and will feel they have been inadequate in fulfilling their parental educational task.

(ii) Threat to parent and child well-being

A lot of pediatricians, speech therapists, educators, and teachers still advise parents who speak a language other than the school language at home to stop using that language (even though such advice goes against the United Nations Convention for Child Rights). Such advice makes parents feel quite insecure. If they decide to follow the advice, they will have monolingual children who can no longer build ties with family members who speak only the non-school language. Furthermore, many parents feel very bad when their child does not speak their language. When children become young adults, they are often angry at their parents for not giving them sufficient opportunity to learn to speak their language of origin. Children may feel they have lost part of their identity as a result.

(iii) Threat to children's well-being

If doctors believe that a bilingual setting leads to language delay they may fail to recognize an underlying medical problem such as a hearing impairment in time, with quite negative consequences for young children, since they have been deprived of the optimal language input they need to learn language. It is very difficult to catch up later.

Many schools require children to speak only the school language. This requirement suppresses a large part of children's identity and does not contribute to their well-being.

Conclusion

There is a continuing need to address harmful myths about bilingual development through information campaigns of all kinds and through broad and good educational provisions for students embarking on professions that might lead to contacts with bilingual children. These campaigns, however, need to be based on methodologically sound scientific research. Luckily, researchers are more and more reaching out to parents and educators through online resources. Readers may find support through research-based initiatives such as the series of podcasts offered by Kletsheads (https://kletsheadspodcast.org/). The website of the Harmonious Bilingualism Network (HaBilNet, https://www.habilnet.org) and its associated YouTube and VIMEO channels contain a wealth of research-based information, and HaBilNet has a free individual consultation service (find out how it works through https://www.habilnet.org/whats-it-like-to-request-a-habilnet-consultation/). These resources can empower parents in countering discriminatory attitudes from professionals with science-based knowledge.

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Tema

BECOMING BILINGUAL WHEN ACCESS TO THE MINORITY LANGUAGE MAY BE COMPROMISED

Between September and December 2023, Babylonia collected questions from parents regarding their children's language development. This article aims to answer the following questions:

– We want our daughter to be fully bilingual – with such a high dominion of each language that people question whether she speaks any other language at all. Both my husband and I speak Spanish and English in this way, having grown up in Mexico going to an English-speaking school and then moving to the US for university and the rest of our adult lives. The actual question: how can we recreate this for our daughter, knowing that she is in the US and will not be immersed in Spanish the way we were when growing up? Plus finding Spanish-speaking child care is hard – is two days on the weekend and evenings in Spanish enough to have her be bilingual? What would you recommend we do so that we set her up for success in both languages? She is 8 months today.

– I am a non-heritage speaker of another language (Spanish). I can speak fluidly but still make errors that native speakers do not make. My husband and I would like our daughter – currently 2 months old – to be fluent in the second language (Spanish) and plan to enroll her in a bilingual learning environment once she is old enough. In the meantime we join a once per week bilingual storytime, and try to read her stories in Spanish at home. My question is: for language exposure & acquisition, is it better for me to try to speak Spanish to her at home if my Spanish has errors, or just wait, stick to small exposures for now, and let her learning come primarily once she has started daycare/ preschool?

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One of the most rewarding endeavors that parents can engage in is that of bringing up children as bilingual or multilingual speakers. It can also be challenging, due to the myriad linguistic environments in which families navigate: the type of community in which a family lives, the attitudes of the community to each of the languages, the nature of the family's own experiences with the languages. The two very interesting questions above concern bilingual children's acquisition of a minority language, Spanish, in the United States (USA), a context in which there exists a very dominant majority language, English.

Becoming fluent in a language that is not the dominant language of the community can be tricky. It is common for the dominant language to pervade most aspects of the child's life, while the non-dominant language may be restricted to certain contexts – e.g., the home, certain relatives, a selection of cultural contexts. In addition, in a context like that of the USA, for sociopolitical (not linguistic) reasons, the majority language may have more prestige. And the child is likely to face more situations when the majority language is used than the minority language – e.g., monolingual English speakers will not know Spanish, necessitating the use of English with such interlocutors. Evidence shows that children growing up in such an environment may gradually move towards greater use of English with age, especially in relation to friends and those in the community, but even in the home, where older siblings can be influential in introducing the dominant language. This is not only true in the USA, but also in other countries and in relation to other bilingual and immigrant populations (Van Mol & de Valk, 2018).

The situations posed in the two cases in the abstract are not the same. In the first, the parents are fully fluent in both languages, but they are concerned that their daughter may not fully acquire the minority language because of the overwhelming presence of English. In the second, the mother asks if she should

We want our daughter to be fully bilingual – with such a high dominion of each language that people question whether she speaks any other language at all. Both my husband and I speak Spanish and English in this way, having grown up in Mexico going to an English-speaking school and then moving to the US for university and the rest of our adult lives. The actual question: how can we recreate this for our daughter, knowing that she is in the US and will not be immersed in Spanish the way we were when growing up? Plus finding Spanish-speaking child care is hard – is two days on the weekend and evenings in Spanish enough to have her be bilingual? What would you recommend we do so that we set her up for success in both languages? She is 8 months today.

minimize the use of her own non-native command of Spanish in favor of later access to more fluent speakers.

In response to both questions, it is important to stress, first, that no two speakers of any language, whether bilingual or monolingual, have exactly the same knowledge of their languages. Several factors influence proficiency in a language (Gathercole, 2016). Individuals can differ in subtle (and not so subtle) ways in vocabulary, pronunciation, sentence structure, conversational interaction, and so forth. There is no such thing as an "ideal" speaker of a language. Ultimately, what we learn in language depends to a large extent on the range of contexts in which we experience that language. A common effect in bilinguals' knowledge is a "distributed effect," whereby the two languages might be used in different contexts (home vs school, sports vs cooking, etc.), so what is acquired is different for the two languages. The child might know football words in English and cooking words in Spanish, for example. How widely a child hears and uses each language in a variety of situations matters. So a general answer to both questions in the abstract is that the aim should be one of encouraging the child's access to and interactions with a variety of speakers of Spanish, in a range of diverse situations in which the language may occur naturally.

Responding more specifically:
In cases like that of the first question above, when both parents are fluent bilinguals, evidence shows that children are more likely to use and to become fluent in the minority language when the parents speak the minority language at home. (And in the end, in such contexts in which the majority language is dominant in the community, children still tend to gain majority language proficiency levels that are indistinguishable from those of their peers.) E.g., in Wales, the children who develop Welsh to the highest degree are those whose parents speak only Welsh to them in the home (Gathercole, 2007). De Houwer's (2007) work shows that, similarly, in officially Dutch-speaking Flanders children are more likely to speak a minority language when both parents speak exclusively that language in the home or one speaks that language exclusively and the other speaks that language alongside Dutch.

With regard to the parents' specific question about how much exposure is needed,

Prof. V. C. Mueller Gathercole, Ph.D., has over forty years of experience researching and teaching bilingualism, child language, and linguistics. Her extensive work on bilingualism in Wales and in Miami has been published in multiple journals and in books such as *Issues in the Assessment of Bilinguals* and *Solutions for the Assessment of Bilinguals*. She served as Co-Director of the ESRC Centre for Bilingualism in Wales and recently as President of the International Association for the Study of Child Language.

I am a non-heritage speaker of another language (Spanish). I can speak fluidly but still make errors that native speakers do not make. My husband and I would like our daughter – currently 2 months old – to be fluent in the second language (Spanish) and plan to enroll her in a bilingual learning environment once she is old enough. In the meantime we join a once per week bilingual storytime, and try to read her stories in Spanish at home. My question is: for language exposure & acquisition, is it better for me to try to speak Spanish to her at home if my Spanish has errors, or just wait, stick to small exposures for now, and let her learning come primarily once she has started daycare/preschool?

researchers differ on the exact proportion of time but generally agree that bilingual children can be seen to gain proficiency as long as they have a certain minimal level of exposure (although it is not clear exactly what that minimal level is). Exposure to and development in both languages is supported by contemporaneous cognitive development, so some aspects of language are learned conjointly in the child's two languages, such as learning how to put narratives together and learning some literacy skills. However, success largely depends on the variety of contexts in which the child hears and uses the language, the language sources, and the complexity and domains of the structures involved (Unsworth, 2016). In general, the more parents can encourage access to the non-dominant language, from more, and diverse fluent speakers (Place & Hoff, 2011), the greater the likelihood that the child will become fluent in that language.

The second question poses a slightly more complex situation. In all language learning, children "reconstruct" the language from what they hear those around them saying, by drawing out patterns and rules from that input. Even though the mother asking the question says that she makes occasional errors in Spanish, this should not be a deterrent, because as long as the daughter also has access to other speakers, especially highly fluent speakers, those speakers will provide linguistic models from which the daughter can extract consistent linguistic patterns. (Anecdotal evidence confirms this: Children often end up "correcting" second-language-learning parents who may deviate from the patterns heard from the larger community of speakers.) A child's peers play an important role in language development, so access to other children who speak the language is beneficial. As is the case for all language learning, the earlier, and the more, a child has exposure to the language, the better.

My comments so far have to do with linguistic development *per se* and with providing adequate exposure to the language to ensure successful development. It is important to keep in mind as well everything else that goes into becoming a bilingual speaker. Learning and speaking a language entails issues of identity, access to a community of speakers, the development of attitudes towards a linguistic group and a culture, and even the fostering of a general appreciation of diversity. The form that these take in

a given child can be negative or positive and can be tinged by how those around them view these. It is unfortunate that in many societies in which a minority language is overshadowed extensively by a dominant language there is derision or devaluing of the minority language, of its use, or of those who speak the language. In fact, in many societies people have been punished for speaking a minority language. For example, in Wales, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Welsh children were castigated for speaking a word of Welsh in school and, if "caught," were forced to wear a "Welsh not" (a board usually with "WN" on it, rather like a dunce cap). This board was passed from offending child to offending child until at the end of the day, the last child wearing the "Welsh not" received a physical punishment. The USA is not immune from such negative attitudes, and bilingual children can pick up such views. Too often children of immigrants feel there is no value in speaking the minority language, or, worse, that it is bad for them to speak it (see the contribution by Ruth Kircher in this issue for more about this).

Parents can help foster positive attitudes towards the minority language and its speakers and help their child take joy in his/her ability to communicate in that language and in sharing two languages and two cultures. Positive attitudes can be promoted through interaction with other speakers, especially other families with children who speak the language, through exposure to fun and rewarding events in which the language is used, through exposure to "cool" people like celebrities who speak the language, and even, if possible, through visiting places or countries in which the language is the language of the community.

For both of the questions in the abstract, the bottom line is that children learn a language from exposure to and use of that language. The more parents can foster exposure on a regular basis, the more likely it is that the child will develop into a fully fluent bilingual speaker. And the more that parents can make this a pleasant and rewarding experience, the more likely it is that the child will also develop positive attitudes towards the language, its speakers, and its culture, and will ultimately take pride in his or her identity as a member of that speech community.

I can propose some practical suggestions: In a situation in which there is a dominant language in the community, parents may promote acquisition of the minority language as follows:

1. Use the minority language at home. Help foster an environment in which it is natural, possibly even the default, for the child to use the minority language with you.
2. Expose your child to other adults and children who speak the minority language.
   A. Expose the child to a range of fluent adult speakers of the language.
   B. Encourage interaction with children who are also learning or speak the minority language.
   C. The more you can expose your child to a variety of sources for the language, the richer his/her experience with the language will be.[1]
3. Make sure you continue to use and expose your child to the minority language once the child starts school, especially if the majority language is dominant there.
4. If possible, send your child to a bilingual school or one in which the minority language is used as a medium of education.
5. Approach the acquisition of language as a natural and positive phenomenon and expose your child to the joy and benefits of being bilingual and everything that that entails beyond knowing the language itself.
6. Finally, don't give up. There will be ups and downs in your child's uptake of the minority language, or even in particular aspects of the language. Such transitions and pockets of abilities are natural in language development, regardless of whether the child is growing up as a monolingual or bilingual speaker..

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1 As a child gets older, parents can take advantage of internet sites in which one can directly interact with and have live conversations with speakers of many other languages. A few are the following:
Speaky: https://www.speaky.com/
Tandem: https://www.tandem.net/
For more information, see https://preply.com/en/blog/language-exchange-app/.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTIVATING THE MINORITY LANGUAGE TO ENSURE CHILDREN'S BILINGUALISM

Tema

Between September and December 2023, Babylonia collected questions from parents regarding their children's language development. This article aims to answer the following questions:

- **We are parents of two children (9 and 6 years). At home we do not follow an OPOL approach, instead we use the two family languages flexibly and according to the communicative moments. The children almost always respond in their strongest language, which is also the language that is dominant in the environment around us. On the one hand we understand that this is normal, on the other we feel that their skills in one of the family languages are not developed enough. Better to adopt an OPOL approach? But how to avoid forcing and frustrating impositions?**
- **If I speak to my child sometimes in Catalan and primarily in english , will I create confusion? I want her to acquire this language but it's hard for me to stick to it 100%. My partner speaks only english to her**
- **We are an English speaking family living in the United States. My husband is a native French speaker, but has never spoken French to our boys who are now 5 and 8 years old. He would like to start teaching them now but they get easily frustrated and try to avoid engaging with him if he's speaking in French. What's his best bet for getting them to learn at this point? What can I do as an English speaker to help**

Simona Montanari | California State University, Los Angeles

Simona Montanari is a Professor in the Department of Child and Family Studies at California State University, Los Angeles. She received her Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Southern California specializing on early trilingual development. Her research focuses on speech/language development in multilingual children.

More and more families in our globalized world are interested in raising children who are fluent in multiple languages and competent at navigating different cultures. But raising multilingual and multicultural children can take some efforts, especially when families live in countries in which one language is ever dominant (for example, English in the United States or Italian in Italy). Traditionally, mixed families (in which parents are from different countries and/or have different native languages) have been advised to use the "one parent one language" (OPOL) approach to raise bilingual children from the time they are born, where parent A consistently speaks language A with the child, and parent B consistently speaks language B with the child. Note that for this approach to work, parents have been advised to be *consistent*. Specifically, they must not only reliably speak their language with the child but they must socialize them into responding in the same language by adopting discourse strategies that highlight their language preference (perhaps by even faking not to understand the non-parental language, see Lanza, 1997). This is not because parental language switching/mixing or acceptance of the other language will confuse the child but because switches to/acceptance of the other language will signal to the child that it is appropriate to use the non-parental language (Lanza, 1997). In this case, the child may just end up choosing the language they prefer – almost certainly the one spoken in the community, thus never learning or losing skills in the parent's or minority language.

While the OPOL approach was hailed as the most effective way to raise a bilingual child for almost a century, research in the last twenty years has shown that it may not be the best approach to ensure bilingualism in children, especially for some families (De Houwer, 2007). For example, hearing one language from just one parent may limit language exposure to just how that single person speaks it; if both parents speak the same minority language (say, Spanish in the

United States), the child will be more successful at learning this language when both parents use it consistently at home. Ultimately, the acquisition of the societal or local language will happen naturally through schooling and exposure to mainstream culture, so increasing exposure and use of the minority language is the best strategy to ensure bilingualism in children.

So what does the latest research say about this issue? The key messages are that:

1. In order to ensure that a child learns a minority language, extra effort should be made to "protect" time spent using this language. While learning the societal/local language will happen naturally for the child, learning the minority language will depend on how much exposure to, and practice with, this language the child will have.
2. When both parents speak the societal language at home, in addition to one or both parents using a minority language, the odds of the child learning to speak the minority language decrease substantially. Chances for children speaking the home minority language are highest in monolingual homes using only the minority language, or in bilingual homes where both parents speak the minority language and in addition at most one parent speaks the societal language (De Houwer, 2007).
3. While the OPOL approach may feel unnatural for some parents because some situations call for multiple-language use (for example, when speakers of other languages are present), parents can be successful at optimizing their home language environment to maximize minority language exposure.

These considerations give us some insights as to how to best promote bilingualism among children. First, the child will need a large amount of exposure to the minority language in order to learn it. Speaking the societal language at home will limit the child's opportunities to hear and practice the minority language. Limited amount of exposure to this language may often result in passive bilingualism, which means that the child will understand the language but speak it limitedly. Thus, unless the child is exposed to the minority language outside of the home, limiting minority language use at home may result in the child favoring the societal language with consequences for the proficiency they will develop in the non-societal language.

Families who have not reliably spoken the minority language at home and have children who already prefer the societal language can, however, make adjustments to home language use to increase their children's minority language exposure. First, they can gradually expand their own use of the minority language, actively choosing this language over the societal language when possible. For example, they may begin by using the minority language in play contexts, where the communicative demands are more limited and children can actively participate with limited proficiency. Parents may also continue using the societal language in certain situations, for example, to help their children with homework (which will most likely be in the societal language), but they may decide to use the

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If I speak to my child sometimes in Catalan and primarily in English, will I create confusion? I want her to acquire this language but it's hard for me to stick to it 100%. My partner speaks only English to her.

minority language in all other communicative contexts. Children may continue to respond in the societal language; but over time, increased exposure to the minority language will be beneficial. An additional strategy is to exploit the media to increase minority language exposure at home. Children can be introduced to new media content that entertains them – be it on TV, online, or through music – but that also further exposes them to the minority language. Exposure to media alone will not make children fluent in a language in which they have limited competence but it will increase their opportunities to hear sounds, words, and sentences in that language. Parents could also recruit a friend, grandparent, babysitter, or au-pair who exclusively speaks the minority language to the child. This is indeed a very effective method for encouraging school-age children to learn a new language (or a language they understand but speak in a limited way): children will develop a new language use pattern with this person that exclusively relies on the minority language. It is crucial that parents communicate their appreciation of the minority language and of bilingualism to their children, so that they understand why speaking a language that is not used by mainstream society is important. Finally, since education plays a crucial role in promoting bilingualism in school age, the last and perhaps most successful strategy for helping children gain fluency in a minority language is to enroll them in an educational program that uses this language for instruction. Parents can choose from Saturday/Sunday language schools, where children receive instruction in the minority language once a week for a few hours, to bilingual/full immersion programs, where children are educated in a combination of both the societal and minority language or fully in the minority language.

As an expert in multilingual development with two trilingual teen daughters, I know that all these strategies can be effective in raising multilingual children. First, we strictly adopted the OPOL approach at home since our daughters were born, with me using exclusively Italian, my husband (an American English speaker) English, and our nanny (a Mexican Spanish speaker) Spanish. Not only were we consistent in our language choice but we encouraged the girls to answer in the language we had adopted through discourse strategies that highlighted our language preference. While my husband did not speak Italian and our language of communication was English, he understood the importance of emphasizing Italian and Spanish, the minority languages, in the American context. We thus actively limited English use at home to expose the children primarily to Italian and Spanish. Not only did we enlist one specific person to provide input in those languages but also exploited the media to increase Italian and Spanish exposure. In fact, until our daughters were five, we created a context where Italian and Spanish prevailed in their daily life, with TV watching and music listening occurring exclusively in these languages. We also actively sought Italian- and Spanish-speaking families with children who spoke those languages so that the girls could have a "community of practice" (Oriyama, 2016) – various speakers, including peers – with whom to engage in both of those languages. When the girls began school, we enrolled them in an Italian/English dual language program, in which instruction was delivered in both languages from age five to eleven. Finally, we took the girls on extensive trips to Italy and Mexico to show them that Italian and Spanish, while being minority languages in our context, were languages spoken by the majority of the community in those countries.

While orchestrating such a family language plan might appear daunting for some families, ultimately, parents should assess the extent to which raising bilingual children is a priority and whether

they feel there will be consequences of modifying home language use patterns. Clearly, the easiest situation is adopting the OPOL approach from the moment children are born, so that they will adopt a specific language use pattern with each parent from the start, where speaking the minority language feels natural. But parents can be successful at increasing minority language exposure even with older children who already favor the societal language. Nonetheless, if adopting OPOL or increasing the use of the minority language at home causes stress, either to parents, children or both, families should reassess what is in their best interest. Ultimately, parents should strive for everyone to experience harmonious bilingual development (De Houwer, 2015), where both children and families have a positive subjective experience with bilingualism and develop wellbeing in their language contact situation. De Houwer (2020) is an excellent accessible source on why so many children who hear two languages end up speaking just a single language. Hopefully parents can use it to further learn how to best promote bi/multilingualism in their children.

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We are an English speaking family living in the United States. My husband is a native French speaker, but has never spoken French to our boys who are now 5 and 8 years old. He would like to start teaching them now but they get easily frustrated and try to avoid engaging with him if he's speaking in French. What's his best bet for getting them to learn at this point? What can I do as an English speaker to help their learning?

Tema

How to retain a newly acquired language after returning from a stay abroad

Between September and December 2023, Babylonia collected questions from parents regarding their children's language development. This article aims to answer the following question:

– My children (German-speaking, monolingual - city of Bern) attended school in France due to our family's stay abroad for several months. They learned to communicate and they all have a great foundation in French (they are 4, 6 and 8 years old). However, I wonder how I can continue to promote their French skills in a German-speaking environment at home. Extracurricular activities are only available quite far away (Biel, Fribourg) and with bilingual families, German is simply spoken, as this is also the school language. Or is this not necessary at all and can I trust that the basics will emerge when French is needed again? Thank you very much for your answer!

Nikolay Slavkov
| University of Ottawa

I am trained as a linguist but have expanded my focus from technical-theoretical issues to more applied, educational, psychological, social, and policy aspects of language(s). My interests are in bilingualism and multilingualism, language teaching and learning, language and society, family language policy (FLP), inclusion, equity, diversity and social justice.

Introduction

The question that this article responds to is interesting and important, and is often asked by families in similar circumstances. It is hard to give a definitive answer because there are many different factors that may affect the long-term retention of a language that was acquired through a brief stay abroad and then exposure to that language stopped upon return to the home country (sometimes this is referred to as a returnee situation or context). The current research on this topic is not very conclusive and there is a large degree of individual variation, but overall, my recommendation would be to 1) look for strategies to help the children continue to have some exposure to the language that is no longer used regularly (French in the case described in the abstract), 2) find some opportunities to also produce that language (i.e., speak and write French, if possible), and 3) keep the language relevant in the children's lives, also trying to connect it to positive experiences and have fun with it. To expand on this recommendation, I will first explain some theoretical-conceptual aspects related to the question and then I will list a few specific suggestions for strategies that might be used for language retention and re-activation.

Family Language Policy (FLP)

One of the research fields that deals with this topic is the field of family language policy (FLP). FLP combines insights from language development research and language policy research and seeks to understand how bi/multilingual children learn and retain their languages, how children can flourish in various languages, and what their families' impact and role are in this process (see, for example, King & Fogle, 2008). In the case described in the abstract, the family made the choice to relocate to France for a few months and enroll the children in a French school. As I have shown in some of my previous work, the language of schooling is a powerful factor that influences children's

language outcomes (Slavkov, 2017). The stay in France also provided natural exposure and socialization opportunities for the children which helped them learn to communicate in French quickly, as pointed out by the parent. To use De Houwer's (2009) terms, the family probably has positive attitudes towards French and high impact beliefs (beliefs that parents' choices and actions are not inconsequential and that they influence the child's language outcomes). This helped the three children acquire an initial foundation in French, as aptly described by the parent. One question that arises is how thoroughly and deeply the three children acquired French. Because of the relatively short exposure of a few months, they probably did not acquire as much vocabulary or grammar structure as children who have spent a longer period of time in France, or as children who were born and raised there. This is not a trivial point: children are generally very good with the phonological aspects of language and even after a few months of exposure through a stay abroad they may sound just like the other French-speaking children at their school. However, that would likely be only on the surface and their internal knowledge of grammar and the richness of their vocabulary would still be more limited, and that limitation may remain somewhat hidden. Furthermore, when it comes to reading and writing, we should also assume that these skills would be less developed in French after just a brief period of schooling in that language, in comparison with children who have had longer period of schooling in French. Overall, it would be reasonable to assume that in this case the children have a foundation in French but the acquisition process is far from complete.

Language attrition

Another relevant point to the case described in the abstract is that the children have likely started to forget or lose some of their French since their return to a predominantly German-speaking schooling and social environment in Bern, Switzerland. The research field that deals with this phenomenon is the field of language attrition, and more specifically in this case, the field of second/foreign language attrition (see, for example, Mehotcheva & Köpke, 2019). Within this field, the question that one may wonder about is how quickly and to what extent a child would forget or lose an additional language that they have learnt over the course of several months during a stay abroad. Once again, it is difficult to comment on this, considering that we do not know for sure how much exactly was acquired previously and to what extent the new language has solidified. A period of several months in France is quite short and although the literature is not conclusive on this topic, some authors suggest that a few of years of living in the L2 environment would be more likely to result in lasting retention. The question of age also comes to mind. Generally, older children may be

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less vulnerable to attrition than younger ones and thus the 8-year-old may have higher chances of French language retention than the younger siblings. However, again, this prediction is not set in stone and outcomes may vary. Additionally, the language attrition literature has generally found that productive aspects of language, such as speaking and writing, are harder to retain than receptive aspects of language, such as recognizing words, listening, reading, and understanding. It may also be expected that the longer the time that elapses between when exposure stopped and potential future renewed exposure to the language, the slower or more difficult the re-activation might be. Overall, the phenomenon of language re-learning or re-activation has been studied less than language attrition, but there are some studies that report reactivation after a period of no active use of a language. So, as the parent suggests in the abstract, if a child has acquired a base, we can assume that some French will re-emerge, but the longer we wait the less likely this would be and the more the child would need to re-learn.

Retention and Reactivation Strategies

Strategies aimed at retention and re-activation of a language to which a child no longer has exposure can vary from one family to another, depending on access and personal preferences. We can think of these strategies as having both linguistic aspects and socio-psychological aspects. In terms of linguistic aspects, the objective would be to expose the child to as much authentic linguistic input in the target language as possible, and also to give the child opportunities to put that input into practice by producing language (output) and interacting with the language (recall the importance of productive skills mentioned in the previous section). In terms of socio-psychological aspects, the objective would be to give the child opportunities to use the language within an authentic and appropriate social environment and to associate French with positive emotions, which would in turn influence the child's desire to retain it. Of course, none of these strategies would be as effective as the previous situation of living in a French speaking environment and going to school in France, but nonetheless they can mitigate the effects of language attrition and facilitate retention. Some examples may include reading books to the child or with the child (perhaps the 8-year-old could already read some on their own as well), listening to songs, podcasts, watching TV or movies in French, playing board games or video games in French, or engaging with social media or electronic devices in French (when age appropriate and with parental guidance, as needed). With older children who may use computers or cell phones, the settings of the device could be switched to French, or web-browsers can be set to French. Other technological applications may include setting chat bots or smart home platforms like Alexa or Google Home to French, or engaging with AI tools such as ChatGPT in French, etc. For parents who do not want to use too much technology with their children, museum visits where there may be signs, recordings, videos, live presentations, or interactive workshops in multiple languages, escape-rooms, guided tours of cultural or historic landmarks, city walking tours, etc., are options to be explored. Cafes and restaurants where French is spoken may also be a good idea and the family could create a habit of going to a certain place where the children have a chance to hear and speak some French, and thus associate pleasant family activities with that language. As a personal anecdote, in mostly German-speaking Vienna, my family has a favourite little French bistro where we eat quiche, salad, and desert once every few weeks and we speak French with the very friendly and kind owner. This has turned into a family ritual that reminds us of the value of French and we associate this language with positive emotions. Family meals and/or movie nights at home (for example French Fridays) may also be integrated into the plan. For example, the family can watch a movie in French once a week and also combine this with delicious French treats like macarons, mousse au chocolat, crème brulée, and so on. Holidays, trips to visit family or friends, or summer camps in a region or country where French is spoken are also beneficial strategies for re-learning and reactivation that have been documented by some researchers.

Families themselves can be creative and pro-active in developing their own strategies. The key points to remember are that children need 1) input or exposure (in

other words, they need to hear the language so they can keep their knowledge of the structure, vocabulary, and sound system alive and build on the already existing knowledge); 2) production or output (in other words, opportunities to use the language by speaking, interacting, or writing in it, not just hearing it or reading it); and 3) opportunities to associate the language with positive experiences and keep its social relevance in their lives, which would keep them motivated and interested, rather than seeing continuous French learning as a chore or a punishment.

Some words of caution

In some of the early stages of the language development and family language policy literature there was perhaps more of a focus on what parents do or can do, a focus that sometimes gave the impression that children are passive recipients of parental actions and strategies. However, in later work there has been more awareness and more discussion of children's agency. In other words, children can and do form counterstrategies in response to parental strategies: they may resist or refuse to engage in some activities, including speaking a given language, and they may very well promote their own linguistic agenda (usually using the majority or dominant societal language, or the language that they use at school or use with most of their friends). As I have found in some of my own work (Slavkov, 2015), children may develop negative emotions and strong reactions (e.g. they may get upset, start crying, etc.) or they may get embarrassed if they are asked or forced to speak a given language. Normativity, correction, or comments about their incomplete knowledge, errors, "accent", etc. can also impact negatively children's desire to use a previously acquired language. This is why it is important to be persistent but gentle, loving, empathetic, and understanding in promoting language retention and reactivation. Finding numerous and rich activities that represent positive experiences and fun, game-based ways of practicing French should be viewed as a golden standard. At the same time, realistic expectations are also important. Perhaps none of these strategies could replace living in a French-speaking region or country and being enrolled in a school where the language of instruction is French. Thus, the retention and re-activation of French upon return to the German-speaking environment described in the abstract will likely be limited in the new context with fewer opportunities to use French. Nonetheless, with a positive attitude and some careful parental planning some retention and potentially further development can be achieved.

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Tema

THE PURSUIT OF LITERACY IN TWO LANGUAGES AT THE SAME TIME

Between September and December 2023, Babylonia collected questions from parents regarding their children's language development. This article aims to answer the following questions:

– We are a multilingual home (Spanish; German) and would like our children to learn to read and write in both languages. My 6-year-old son is learning to read and write in German in school. Is it advisable for my child to start learning to read in Spanish only once he has learned to do so in German? Or is it feasible to pursue his literacy in both languages at the same time?

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Although literacy is often associated with learning to read and write in school, it is a part of a family's language practices. Language development and literacy learning are closely related, so early literacy often emerges from everyday social interactions in the home. Young children acquiring two languages from birth (known as Bilingual First Language Acquisition or BFLA) are already on the path to biliteracy when they sing, play games, tell stories or read books with their parents in their two languages. However, parents often have concerns when BFLA children start school and are only taught to read and write in one of their two languages, which is usually the dominant societal language. They may wonder if their children should also learn to read and write in the non-school language, that is, the other language that is used only within the family and is not taught in school. Some parents may worry that teaching their children to read and write in the non-school language will interfere with the reading and writing of the school language in school.

Would learning to read and write in two languages at the same time burden and confuse the child? There is no evidence suggesting that biliteracy development is harmful. Informal literacy instruction in the non-school language in the family does not negatively affect the formal learning of the school language in school. Here are five research-based reasons for fostering bilingual children's biliteracy:

1. Young bilingual children already have an early understanding of print in both languages

Bilingual children possess metalinguistic awareness from a young age. This explicit and conscious knowledge about language extends to language in print. There is limited research on the early biliteracy development of BFLA children. However, we can draw from research conducted on emergent bilingual children who are exposed to one language from birth and acquire an additional language in early

childhood (known as Early Second Language Acquisition or ESLA). Four- and five-year-olds ESLA children know how to handle books (e.g., they know where to start when reading a book) and understand the directionality of the text (e.g., from left to right, or from top to bottom) in each language. They can also distinguish the different scripts of their two languages quite early on because many objects in their immediate environment display print, e.g. clothes, plastic bags and food labels. For example, a Japanese-English ESLA child can differentiate between the logographic Japanese script and the alphabetic English script.

ESLA children can distinguish between their two languages even when they share the same script. For example, when given two versions of the same book, English-Spanish ESLA preschoolers can distinguish the language based on the print, i.e., English or Spanish. The same script also makes it easier for the children to identify letters. If ESLA children possess an early understanding of print with later exposure to a second language, it is reasonable to expect BFLA children who received earlier exposure to print in both languages to have the same, if not higher, level of print awareness. These early signs of print knowledge show that bilingual children are far from being confused. Instead, they are quite ready for literacy learning in both languages.

2. Language and literacy learning in both languages are interconnected and can be transferred from one language to the other

When bilingual children learn two languages, they are not learning them separately. Children's learning processes are interconnected with cross-language transfer in several aspects. Take, for example, the development of vocabulary which is essential for academic success. Bilingual children may find it easier to learn a new word in the school language if they have already acquired the novel concept in their non-school language at home. Also, when they already possess a larger vocabulary in their non-school language, they become better at using social and linguistic cues to understand the meaning of new words, including those in the school language. BFLA preschoolers who engage in literacy practices in their non-school language have been found to possess a wide range of vocabulary in the school language. They receive more language-rich input at home from their parents than in classrooms, where they do not get much individual attention from the teacher.

When bilingual children learn to read in two languages, they acquire a deeper conceptual and linguistic proficiency common to both. Strategies and abilities such as decoding and phonological awareness are interconnected and can be transferred from one language to the other. While phonological transfer commonly occurs for languages that share the same script (e.g., English and Spanish), there is also evidence of phonological transfer for languages with different scripts such as English and Chinese. Knowledge of two different scripts enhances a child's phonological awareness, which gives them an edge when they later possibly begin learning a third language in school.

We are a multilingual home (Spanish; German) and would like our children to learn to read and write in both languages. My 6-year-old son is learning to read and write in German in school. Is it advisable for my child to start learning to read in Spanish only once he has learned to do so in German? Or is it feasible to pursue his literacy in both languages at the same time?

An ability to write in the non-school language can provide temporary support when bilingual children start school. It can help BFLA and ESLA first graders express more ideas when they write in the school language. Although they may make grammar or spelling mistakes, these inconsistencies gradually disappear as they master the writing conventions of the school language.

3. Literacy practices help maintain and develop the non-school language in the family

Bilingual children tend to become increasingly dominant in the school language as they grow older. When the non-school language is limited to everyday interactions in the family, children may speak less and less of it. Home literacy practices address the widening gap. They help maintain the use of the non-school language and support its development.

Shared book reading is perhaps the single most important literacy practice. Parent's direct teaching (e.g., giving dictation) is not as important as informal learning through book reading. Books provide linguistically rich input that builds vocabulary. Reading promotes cognitively demanding quality talk, so parents should read *with* their children and discuss what was read. Talking and thinking about books helps children build reading proficiency. When parents read to young children, they cultivate an interest in reading and increase parent-child bonding, which supports the development of the non-school language.

Parents should focus on developing an interest in reading by creating a literacy-rich home environment, e.g., they can prepare a range of engaging and appropriate literacy resources in the non-school language that their children enjoy. Bilingual books, if available, are a useful addition to the home library. Shared reading, availability of age- and genre-appropriate literacy resources and modelling of reading by parents are the foundation for independent reading at older ages. Although not all bilingual children become avid readers, parents should encourage independent reading because it contributes to high literacy skills in the non-school language. When children read willingly and independently, their literacy learning no longer depends on parents. Children can acquire new vocabulary and complex grammar and access a wealth of knowledge on various topics on their own through independent reading.

Writing is a difficult skill to include as part of home literacy practices because of the more structured learning, but it can be facilitated by attending weekend school. Children who are strong readers tend to be strong writers even when they have little practice because they can draw from their rich literacy experiences when they write. However, parents can create opportunities for children to practice writing the non-school language, e.g., postcards and letters to grandparents living far away.

4. Literacy practices in the non-school language help cultivate a bicultural identity

Language and identity are closely related. Our identities are reflected in the languages we use and the languages we use shape our identities. Bilingual children who are highly dominant in the societal language tend to associate themselves with the majority culture. However, those with high levels of bilingualism and biliteracy are more likely to identify with a bicultural identity. Their exposure to the non-school language and minority culture through books and other resources contributes to their identity development. Parents who want to raise their children as bicultural bilinguals would find literacy skills helpful in facilitating their children's identity development. The long process of identity formation extends into young adulthood, so it is necessary to maintain literacy practices until children are much older.

5. It gets harder to teach the non-school language later

Children become busier with their school and extra-curricular activities from middle to late childhood and adolescence, so teaching the non-school language *after* they learn the school language may not be feasible. As children become increasingly proficient in the school language, they may become frustrated with their lower proficiency in the non-school language and more reluctant to learn how to

read and write it. Early childhood allows children to get a head start in learning their non-school language. They spend more time at home, so this is probably the best time for family members to provide literacy-rich input and engage them in literacy practices in the non-school language.

Every bilingual child has the potential to acquire biliteracy. Parents may want to support their children's learning of the school language once they start school. However, support is unnecessary because school lessons usually begin with the basics. Research has indicated that family literacy practices in the school language have little impact on children's learning. However, family literacy practices in the non-school language are essential for the language to develop. They also build a strong foundation for academic learning in both languages.

Parents need to invest a lot of time and effort in fostering their children's biliteracy. They may not feel confident they can help their children learn to read and write in the non-school language. However, they can get the support from parents who share the same goal. For example, they can get practical advice from the community in the weekend school, particularly from parents whose older children have acquired biliteracy quite successfully. The path to biliteracy is not easy, but it can be an enjoyable journey for parents and children with a satisfying reward at the end.

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