

Bilingual Language Acquisition & Development and
How Bilingualism is Addressed in the American School System
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Abstract

In this paper I will define the various types of bilingualism in the specific contexts of Spanish-English bilingualism in the United States. I will discuss the benefits of a bilingual education. I will explore theories of bilingual language acquisition relating to language growth over time and the ability to distinguish speech sounds of languages. I will discuss brain development of a bilingual individual and the role of code switching as a key process in language acquisition. I will emphasize the importance of bilingual education programs such as dual language and immersion schools and how these schools function. I will also discuss the importance of linguistic diversity as it connects to cultural identity. I will discuss the implication of least-biased assessment in the field of speech-language pathology for bilingual students and the topic of standardized testing in multiple languages. Overall, I propose goals to make bilingual education a sustainable model for the future of bilingual language education in the American school system.

As a student in the field of Communication Disorders, I have taken a variety of courses which frame the intricate and holistic process of learning language. As somebody whose future profession is dedicated to promoting speech and language development in young children, I am continuously amazed by how naturally infants are able to process language in such a naturalistic way despite the seemingly intricate process of learning language. Furthermore, I have been amazed (and in part, jealous) by the ability of infants to do this with multiple languages when most adults struggle so exhaustingly with this process. No matter how many language learning apps one downloads, they cannot seem to speak French like the toddler next door. This fascination of successful bilingual language development in infants has brought me to writing this thesis. Additionally, it is evident that once language skills are acquired, they must be maintained. The common lament of “I used to speak (x) language, but I lost the skill as I grew up” is one heard too frequently. Bilingualism, especially in children, is a trait that is not only impressive but also prepares the child for academic and professional success in their future endeavors as United States becomes a more globalized community. Bilingualism bridges the gaps between generations, cultures, and families. Evidently, language development for bilingual children is just as important as any other developmental domain, such as motor, cognitive, and social development. Why, then, is bilingualism and bilingual language development pushed to the side by American school systems? In this essay I will summarize the process of bilingual language development, discuss benefits of a bilingual education, analyze and argue methodologies to promote a sustainable and practical model of bilingual education within the American school system.

The first question that should be addressed is what exactly bilingualism is.

When one thinks of a bilingual individual, they often think of someone who is equally proficient in both languages. The reality is that bilingual individuals are rarely equally proficient in both languages. What one may consider a balanced bilingual, or someone who is equally proficient in both languages, is very much a myth, as one language is typically dominant over the other. This language dominance often favors the grammatical rules of one language and applies them to the other. In addition, various types of bilingualism exist. Therefore, there are several ways to describe the bilingual experience. According to Hult, et al. (2015), bilingual individuals are either “receptive” or “expressive” (Hult 353). A person who is a “receptive” bilingual will have stronger reading and oral comprehension skills, whereas a person who is an “expressive” bilingual is more proficient in speaking and writing (Hult 2015). Similarly, Nacamulli (2015) labels expressive bilingualism as “active” and receptive bilingualism as “passive” (Nacamulli 2015). It is true that receptive language skills often solidify before expressive skills, as seen when an individual learning another language appears “silent” when they are in the intermediate stages of processing linguistic input. However, I propose that the terms “passive” and “receptive” used by Hult and Nacamulli should not indicate linguistic incompetence or weakness, considering the auditory processing activity that occurs in the left hemisphere of the brain during reception. Although these categorizations of bilingualism certainly can be applied to individual's proficiency, I propose that bilingualism exists on a continuum. What is the definitive line between expressive and receptive bilingualism? One's language skills are constantly developing, even past the early childhood years, therefore the bilingual experience can be different for so many individuals.

Another distinction on the definition of bilingualism is the question of sequential versus simultaneous language acquisition. Simultaneous bilinguals are those who learn language through bilingual first acquisition, for example learning both English and French at the exact same time during infancy. Successive or sequential acquisition, however, is learning a second language after the first or native language is mastered (Goldstein 2015). Again, I propose that this line between what constitutes as sequential and successive could be considerably unclear. Language is not acquired in a rigid manner, but rather in a continuous and dynamic way over time.

While conducting an interview with a trilingual English, Hebrew, and Spanish speaker, I identified some valuable questions on this concept of successive versus sequential bilingualism. The woman I interviewed acquired her English language skills first through her parents and then acquired Spanish at age two Spanish speakers who became her primary caregivers at that stage in her life. One could certainly question what the cut-off for simultaneous and successive bilingual language acquisition is. Acquiring Spanish at the age of two allowed this woman to develop phonological, semantic, and syntactic skills of that second language despite being initially exposed to only English. Interestingly enough, Spanish became this woman's more dominant language despite being exposed to English earlier in her life, further showing the complexities of language acquisition.

In conclusion, I propose that there is not one type of bilingualism. Overall, bilingual language proficiency is defined based on complex, dynamic factors such as interaction of grammatical systems, sociocultural elements, the probability that the language is actually used, vocabulary production, and comprehension accuracy with "extraordinary temporal and

perceptual precision” (Goldstein 54). Many of these factors and skills may vary based on individual experience, therefore proving the complexities of bilingual language development on a person-to-person basis.

Similarly, the various theories of how an individual becomes bilingual is a subject of much debate. It is true that bilingual babies follow similar typical milestones of language development as monolingual babies as expressed by Nacar (2015). However, one bilingual individual is not equal two monolingual individuals. The idea that an individual who is bilingual is not the same as 2 individuals who are monolingual is expressed by the “father of bilingualism,” Francois Grosjean, and has become widely accepted. Instead, bilingual individual’s language development and proficiency should be compared to the typical norms of other bilingual individuals (Grosjean 2016).

The understanding of bilingualism in the field on speech-language pathology, a discipline involved in the assessment of clinical management of language, still lacks adequate research to provide norms on speech and language development and effective intervention techniques for bilingual children. However, theories of bilingual language acquisition do exist just as they do for monolingual language development.

One of these theories is presented by Owens (2005), who describes the various milestones of both simultaneous and sequential language development. Owens hypothesizes that simultaneous bilingual language development occurs in three steps: first, the child’s language and phonology systems, or speech sounds systems, act as one with one grammar system being more dominant. Next, the child begins to separate the two vocabularies by age three while still applying the grammatical and syntactic rules of the more dominant language. In the final stage,

Owens hypothesizes that the two linguistic systems are almost completely separated despite occasional code switching, or alternating between languages. Though Owens appears a credible source on the topic of language acquisition, I do question these steps of simultaneous language acquisition that he proposes (Owens 2005).

While it is impractical to ask an infant “which is Spanish and which is English?” for obvious reasons, Nácar (2015) describes how infants can distinguish their languages as early as 4-6 months of age, calling question to the first step that Owens’ proposes (Nácar 2015).

Owens hypothesizes stages of sequential language development which strongly mirror the development of a monolingual child. When learning this second language, the child follows three steps. First, a personal and social relationship is formed with the second language community. This idea of social and cultural ties in language acquisition and development is strongly in accordance with the theory of social language development proposed by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978). In the second step, the child makes an effort to communicate in the second language. In the final step, the child focuses on correctly applying the rules of the second language, such as syntax and grammar. The speaker may experience phonological interference, which occurs when the speech sounds of the native language apply to the second language. This often occurs in sequential language development if the learner is past adolescence, which is past the prime period for an individual to be exposed to new speech sounds in a naturalistic way (Hulit 2015). Either way, Hulit describes Robert Owen’s theory and how proficiency and rules of one’s native language strongly influence the development of the second language during sequential language development (Hulit 2015).

In his theory, Owens does not recognize the separation of the two languages during the first stage. Based on Nácar's findings, infants do, in fact, recognize the difference between the two languages (Nácar 2015). This point will be discussed more in detail in subsequent paragraphs.

Bilingualism is identified as a “dynamic system” where the two languages work together (yet exist independently, as supported by Nácar (2015)) to support and foster development in one another (Goldstein 2012). Goldstein hypothesizes stages of sequential language development that show similar elements to that of Owens. First, the individual differentiates grammar and vowel sounds of the languages based on language specific experiences. Next, the individual refines their skills in the second language by improving speed and efficiency of information processing skills (Goldstein 2015). These modern theories share several important commonalities in the relationship between languages which are necessary factors in bilingual language development. Other commonalities include the interplay and support that the languages provide for one another. One can conclude that two of the most influential factors of bilingual language development (both simultaneous and sequential) are interplay between languages and social interaction (Vygotsky 1978).

This next important question to consider on the topic of bilingualism is how infants distinguish which phonemes and suprasegmental features like prosody and intonation belong to which language. Fantini (1985) notes “language differentiation is rooted in social context” (Fantini 71). This is certainly true, as infants acquire language the most naturally when they are surrounded by it. However, how does an infant who is receiving two types of linguistic input differentiate the two? Is the infant able to distinguish the languages at all? The idea of code

switching, also called language transfer, comes into play when the individual switches between languages mid-sentence. This topic will be discussed in detail later in this paper, but for now it is critical to focus on how input is differentiated among languages, rather than combined.

Fantini (1985) proposed the idea that infants sort their world into a series of knowns and unknowns. These knowns and unknowns can include intonation (or melody of speech), vowel sounds, and speech patterns. At the young age of 4 months, infants are already sorting out nonnative speech sounds (Fantini 1985). This is an interesting point to consider, since language differentiation begins even in the pre-speech period. As previously stated, the idea that infants are able to distinguish languages is supported Nacar (2015), who offers evidence from her study where infants were able to “visually distinguish” between two languages from ages 4-6 months by simply watching the lip movements of two faces (Sebastián-Galles, et al. 2012). This is an absolute phenomenon that disappears after the pre-speech period yet is still important in understanding language acquisition and the relationship between languages (Nacar 2015). In a way, this phenomenon is supported by the fact that infants experience and discover their world through the senses. An infant's brain possesses such strong neural plasticity, or capability for change and growth, in the sensory cortices that linguistic information is processed, sorted, and stored there the pre-speech period (Hernandez 2013). Because of this early neural development in the sensory cortices of the brain, infants can pick up on and categorize suprasegmental elements of spoken language (Hernandez 2013). For example, many nouns in English place stress on the first syllable, which may be different in other languages like Spanish. In addition, infants possess the growing ability to distinguish breaks between words based on the melodic and prosodic features of each language. Typically, puberty is the cut-off where, past this point,

acquiring phonemes and suprasegmental elements of another language becomes increasingly more difficult.

Naturally, the phonemes of the native language are often applied to the second language since the speaker has inadvertently tuned out and is not accustomed to producing these nonnative speech sounds beyond adolescence. In terms of simultaneous bilingual acquisition, however, it is up for much debate how these languages interact. While it has been stated earlier in this paper that infants are able to distinguish between languages, the idea of languages building off of one another can be quite controversial. Fantini (1985) suggests a child should acquire two languages simultaneously but in separate environments (Fantini 1985). An example of this would be speaking English at school and Spanish at home. Fantini proposed this idea, which appears to be quite unrealistic in practice (1985). Many children, especially first or second generation Americans, are exposed to different languages in the same environment. In addition, can it be assumed that this ability to separate languages is so critical to successful acquisition? More modern theories on the topic support the idea that code switching is beneficial for a bilingual's acquisition of both languages (Beardson 1986, Baker 2007).

It is important to consider how language is stored in the brain before understanding code switching in depth. As stated earlier, neural pathways, dendrites, and grey matter in the brain develop in the sensory cortices earlier than any other region of the brain, which is why infants naturally absorb so much linguistic information through their senses and their environment (Hernandez 2013). From a young age, auditory information is processed in a part of the brain called Heschl's gyrus in the temporal lobe. Hernandez (2013) notes that words learned later in life (for example, sequential bilingualism) are more associated with activity in the frontal lobe,

where the focus is primarily on word meaning and higher level thinking as opposed to how the word sounds.

There are two central theories about the interaction of two languages in the brain. The first one was proposed by Volterra and Taeschner (1978) and is entitled the Unitary Language System Hypothesis. This theory states that children form a single, hybrid mixture of both languages with specific grammar rules that will eventually separate over time. The other theory, entitled the Dual Language System Hypothesis (Genesee, 1989), proposes that the two languages are kept separate in the brain from the beginning of language input, despite occasional code switching. More modern theorists support the latter hypothesis (Hulit, et al. 2015).

The independent existence posited by modern theorists of these languages in the brains of infants is “rooted in social context” (Fantini 71). An example of this is 20 year old Diana, a SUNY New Paltz student who grew up speaking both English and Spanish. Diana’s language acquisition was rooted in social context as she spoke Spanish at home with her caregivers and English in school with her teachers and classmates. Diana indicates that she knew from a young age what sounds, intonation patterns, and words belonged to what language, a concept that is in accordance with the Dual Language Systems Hypothesis. As states previously, Nacar (2015) describes a study in which bilingual Catalan and Spanish babies of eight months demonstrated discrimination of speech sounds between the languages (Sebastián-Galles, et al. 2012).

Even though more modern theories recognize the independent existence of languages in the brain, it is also important to note that these languages can still work constructively off of one another. An analogy that may help to picture this concept is two “neighbors” (languages) that live in separate homes yet still support each other in times of need. This concept of two

languages “helping” each other is essentially code switching. Code switching can also be called language “transfer”, since various elements of one language are being transferred to the other in a productive way. Past theorists have also coined this concept as language “interference” or “confusion”, yet one should hesitate to use these terms due to their negative connotations. I propose that bilinguals who code switch are not “confusing” their languages, but rather using skills of one language to foster development in the other. Bilingualism was viewed negatively in the past, but more research on the topic has provided information on the subject to support that behaviors like code switching are beneficial. Now it is understood that a bilingual person’s language skills do not equal two isolated sets of monolingual skills, rather the two unique systems that work together in a constructive way (Baker 35).

Code switching happens in a rule governed fashion. It can occur mid-sentence or during an individual utterance. Code switching of nouns, however, is the most common. Code switching also happens based on context, for example topic, setting, and participants (Beardsmore 1986). It is important to note that bilingual individuals only code switch when they know their conversation partner is also bilingual. This concept supports the Dual Language System Hypothesis, or the more modern theory that states the two languages are distinct yet work constructively. A bilingual individual makes the decision whether or not they should code switch with a conversation partner based on the individual's knowledge of the language, showing the bilingual individual’s awareness of the distinction between the languages.

Being bilingual provides many benefits in today’s society. A bilingual individual acts a “bridge” between people, cultures, and generations of families. If an individual is raised by parents who have different native languages, the child will benefit from the ability to speak both

languages, therefore forming a stronger relationship with both cultures and languages. Being bilingual also provides the benefits of access to different traditions, ideas, and ways of thinking as well as career opportunities later in life. Bilingual individuals are often more flexible and creative in thinking (Baker 2007). As a result, bilingual people have increased empathy and social sensitivity due to the knowledge of social cues of each language. The strategic use of code switching proves that bilingual individuals are aware of what social contexts are appropriate for what languages. Additionally, bilingual individuals have increased grey matter and cortex activity in the brain (Nacamulli 2015). Statistically, bilingual individuals also have delayed onset of Alzheimer's by about five years when compared to their monolingual counterparts (Nacamulli 2015). Bilingual individuals also perform better on cognitive tests, given the strong correlation between cognitive development and language development. Improved metalinguistic awareness, or the ability to think about language itself, is also observed in bilingual individuals, specifically when code switching occurs (Hulit 2015). Other skills that bilinguals possess include selective attention, formation of concepts, analytical reasoning, communication flexibility, translation skills, and increased phonological awareness and awareness of arbitrariness of language, all skills that are emphasized in a school setting (Hulit 2015).

Considering infancy through adolescence is the ideal period to learn language as a native speaker would, it is appropriate to think of a child's brain as hardware and their ability to learn language as limitless software. Attending a school that promotes bilingualism has tremendous benefits in our modern day society. A bilingual education will foster proficiency in both languages, making them useful in an academic and home-life setting. Offering books in multiple languages in the classroom will promote literacy in both languages (Baker 2007). Additionally, a

bilingual school environment will promote discussion and empathy towards other cultures and lifestyles.

Although bilingualism has been viewed in antiquated eras a “deficiency” or confusion between language, novelist Sommer (2004) observes in her novel that “more than one language is a supplement, not a deficiency” (Sommer xi). This is certainly true, as any supplement to a child’s education, especially in such a functional area such as language, is valuable in a child’s development.

Despite the United States’ history of being a “melting pot” of cultures and languages, Sommer (2004) explains that monolingualism is still very much the norm in the United States in contrast to other nations. According to Sommers, a US census reports that almost ninety percent of the US population speaks only English, while immigration to the United States has continued to increase in recent years (Portes & Hao 2010). Being that language is so strongly tied with identity and the United State’ identity as a largely diverse population, language diversity should be fostered in both the home and the academic setting. However, this is not the reality in many school systems across the United States. Baker (2007) observes “No caring parent or teacher denies children the chance to develop physically, socially, educationally, or emotionally. Yet we deny many children the chance to develop bilingually and multilingually” (Baker 28).

To solve this issue of bilingual language development being overlooked, different school systems have created different types of environments where bilingual language development is both encouraged and fostered. Baker (2007) notes these types of schools include dual language schools, international schools, heritage language schools, and immersion schools. All of these learning environments differ slightly but all have similar goals in terms of language acquisition.

Ideally, a bilingual child would begin attending one of these programs in preschool where the child will learn and use their language skills through play, interaction with classmates, and interaction with teachers in a language rich environment.

The dual language school, primarily, creates an equal balance between two languages. All types of curriculum (math, social studies, reading) are delivered in both languages at separate times. Students in a dual language school are expected to communicate in one particular language during specified periods of the day. Although this school environment aims to have an equal balance between languages, separation of the two languages is not always practical or possible. As discussed earlier in this paper, language transfer and code switching is a natural and meaningful part of bilingual language development, therefore I believe interplay of languages should not be viewed so negatively (Baker 2007).

A second type of bilingual school that exists is the international school. These schools are typically for children of diplomats or international business people. In schools such as these, English is the predominant language with the native or local language still included into the curriculum. These schools typically reflect the curriculum trends of the United States. This type of school environment is beneficial for students who plan on returning to their home country where they will be using the more dominant language of the international school (Baker 139).

The third type of bilingual school to be discussed is the heritage language school. Heritage language schools deliver much of its curriculum in the “minority language”. The term “minority language” is used to refer to the language that is less dominant in mainstream society. In contrast, the term “majority ethnolinguistic community language” is used by author Hult to describe the language that is most preferred or influential in a community (Hult 355).

Although the United States has no official language, English could be considered the “majority ethnolinguistic community language” as it is quite dominant and influential in mainstream American society (Hulit 2015). Many times, students who speak a language other than English at home will adopt English as their more dominant language by adolescence from the amount of exposure through the media, popular culture, and the school environment. When this happens, the child runs the risk of losing acquired skills in their native language and losing the value of the language in the child’s life. Heritage language schools solve this problem, and are popular in communities that risk the extinction of the native language due to assimilation to a more dominant language or culture. Schools such as these are often funded by religious institutions. Through Heritage language schools, the student’s native language skills will be supported through the curriculum in combination with the majority language. Additionally, the preservation and maintenance of native language will lead to cultural preservation. As Baker states, “If the school supports the child’s minority language, it is supporting the child itself, the child’s home, the child’s family and the child’s heritage. Thereby, the school is maintaining the child’s self-esteem and sense of self confidence” (Baker 121). Similarly, so much of an individual’s language and dialect is tied to identity, and attending a school where native language is fostered is a method of identity preservation (Baker 117-133).

The final type of bilingual school to be discussed is the bilingual immersion school. Originating in Canada in the 1960’s, this type of school strives for students to become equally bicultural and bilingual. Although immersion programs may seem similar to dual language programs, they differ in the amount of exposure to each language. Preschool aged student are 100% exposed to the second language, and as they move up in school the second language

immersion tapers off slightly. By the time the student is in high school, curriculum is delivered equally between the first and second language. Although this type of program may be ideal for monolingual parents, the second language the child is immersed in is rarely used outside of the academic setting (Baker 121).

Each of these academic settings provides a unique experience for a young child to receive a bilingual education. As discussed earlier in this paper, there are many benefits to a bilingual education, which can be fostered in the types of school discussed above. An additional benefit to schools such as these is that a student can develop his or her native language skills in an academic context, rendering both of his or her language systems useful in both the home and school setting.

Different attitudes toward bilingual schools and education have fluctuated during American history. McLaughlin (1985) recounts the history of bilingual education programs in America, starting with the teaching of Latin and Greek in American schools in the 18th and 19th century and German in American schools during the 19th century. The goals of these initial bilingual and second language schools were bilingualism for mainly commercial and international trade reasons (McLaughlin 1985). What is interesting to consider is how this ambivalent attitude toward bilingual education shifted in the late 19th century, specifically the late 1880's to a preference toward English language only. Laws were passed prohibiting languages other than English in both private and public school systems. This was a period of patriotism mixed with xenophobia, where Americans felt economically and politically threatened by a new wave of immigration (McLaughlin 1985).

I propose that the attitude of English language only of the 1880's strongly reflects the current political situation in the United States, given the xenophobia and overly patriotic rhetoric of people in power today (Ariely 2015). How did these attitudes affect the sustainability of bilingual schools and attitudes of bilingualism as a whole? This is a critical question to ask when considering the sustainability of these programs. Although a hostile sentiment towards foreign language continued until the end of World War II, the 1960's marked a shift in attitudes towards bilingualism. This was when Foreign Language in Elementary Schools (FLES) programs were initiated nationwide and were supported by the government. The reasoning for the implementation of these programs was the language and communication barrier that existed between US and other nations, similar to the trade and commercial reasons reasons early bilingual programs were initiated. Additionally, the Civil Rights Movement led parents of African American and Spanish-speaking children to become more vocal and active in their children's education.

Although FLES programs were backed by intense parental support as well as the support of the 1968 Bilingual Education Act, the program's stability was threatened due to lack of a concise definition of bilingual education and its goals. Therefore, the FLES program was not sustainable. The *Lau v. Nichols* case of 1970 stated that "because (English language learners) were unable to speak, read, or write English, they were excluded from receiving the benefits of public school education" (McLaughlin 93). I propose that this is the fundamental reason why bilingual education is necessary. Students cannot thrive in the school environment if their linguistic skills (reading, speaking, and writing) in their native language are not being taken into

account (Hulit 2015). Although the FLES program of the 1960s was not a sustainable method of bilingual education, sustainable methods of bilingual education are possible.

Bilingual education programs can foster language development in multilingual students that fosters growth rather than bias toward a majority language. As previously discussed, there are linguistic, political, cultural, sociological and educational benefits of a bilingual education (Nacamulli 2015). Some of these benefits even include the development of literacy and executive functioning (Grosjean 1). Even though the FLES program of the 1960s and the 1968 Bilingual Education Act, which “defended the right of languages other than English in the school” proved to be unsustainable and unclear in its goals, it provided a model for the potential of bilingual schools in the future (McLaughlin 93). These programs and legislation mainly failed due to unclear definitions and objectives as well as the tax burden on residents (McLaughlin 1985). Given the multitude of benefits that a bilingual education provides, one can formulate specific goals and methods of bilingual education that are both effective and sustainable.

The personal experience of interviewing teachers from a bilingual classroom allows for insight into what methods and goals are implemented into a modern day bilingual classroom. J.H and G.H are two teachers in a bilingual Abbott program school, which serves students of lower socioeconomic backgrounds, in Newark, New Jersey. The idea that these programs serve students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds proves bilingual education can be attainable for students of all socioeconomic backgrounds, not just students whose schools receive the most funding in taxes. The existence of these types of programs suggests that bilingual education has great purpose in a bilingual child’s development. It has been reported that dual language schools in the NYC metropolitan region are on the rise, given that there were 39 new or expanded public

dual language schools in Washington Heights, Queens, in the autumn of 2015 (Harris 2015). These schools have a strong bilingual emphasis and aim to increase access of these bilingual programs to other English-Language learners.

The purpose of this interview with J.H and G.H is to gain insight into the methodologies, goals, and outcomes of an actual bilingual classroom. J.H is a native English speaker from New Jersey while G.H is a native Spanish speaker from Costa Rica. They teach preschool aged students whose first language is Spanish and where Spanish is the home language. The two teachers report the use of methodologies of using both English and Spanish language in the classroom setting. J.H indicates that there is a slightly stronger emphasis on English language expression and reception secondary to the prevalence of monolingual English classrooms as the students progress in their education. Another methodology that the teachers employ in the bilingual classroom is to work collaboratively in both languages. J.H reports that she will ask questions in Spanish followed by G.H's translation of the question in Spanish to aid the student's comprehension in both languages. The teachers utilize repetition, grammatical markers and structure, decreased rate, fluent production, and gradual increase of vocabulary per day. The teachers also utilize materials like age appropriate books, songs, and nursery rhymes in both languages. J.H and G.H report various goals of utilizing these methodologies and materials. J.H reports a goal of making language relevant to the student's lives. Reported outcomes gained from this bilingual classroom include language development, social development, and cultural identity by having parents visit the classroom on their child's birthday to read a story in the child's native language. Other outcomes include student's comprehension in both languages which precedes production in both languages.

Extensive studies of bilingual classrooms have shown their success of these programs. Potowski (2007) tracked the proficiency of Spanish and English speaking students (two having Spanish as their first and two having English as their first) in fifth grade and eighth grade at the Inter-American Magnet School in Chicago, Illinois (Potowski 2007). She discusses the progress made by students in both of these languages, and concludes the benefits of immersion programs like this (Potowski 2007).

Additionally, Potowski states that these bilingual immersion schools “swim against the hegemonic tide in the United States, which since its colonial days has considered the English language a primary factor in uniting its citizens” (Potowski 210). Some may argue that a community functioning under one language initiates unity and cohesion. The problem with this is that it unjustly favors the language and culture of the more dominant community while ignoring the linguistic and cultural diversity of the other. Similarly, Potowski discusses the sociological aspects of language, and how speaking English was previously considered the true test of nationalism and citizenship. This concept appears inaccurate since there is no official national language of the United States. Potowski also proposes that speaking a first language other than English was viewed with skepticism, but native English speakers who learn a second language are held in high esteem for being worldly. This is an interesting point to consider, and likely linked to the xenophobia that runs course in American history (Potowski 2007).

These bilingual schools aim to break that xenophobic tide by promoting immersion of the second language in both native and nonnative English speakers in the same environment. Similarly, these programs integrate the second language into the curriculum without viewing it as a separate subject (Potowski 2007).

The increase of bilingual school programs also raises questions about standardized testing and language policy. Menken (2008) states that “There are now more than five million (English language learners) from all over the world attending public schools in the US and speaking at least 460 different languages” (Menken 3). Based on this statistic and America’s multicultural heritage, there are questions surrounding how native language is currently being assessed in schools just as English language skills are being assessed. The way that federal education policy proposes this question, rather, is what can be done to reinforce English proficiency. As Menken proposes, the educational system is strongly emphasized by what she coins “testing culture” (Menken 3).

This testing culture is based upon the reliance of standardized testing as a measure of growth, proficiency, intelligence, and achievement. The Scholastic Aptitude Test, or SAT, for example, is viewed with high significance when it comes to the student’s advancement in their education. Many students from high socioeconomic backgrounds are offered tools to ensure success on examinations, such as supportive teachers, study tools, and private tutors. However, for some students, the basic need for understanding the language presented on these standardized tests is challenged. As a matter of fact, Menken states that English language learning students on average perform 20-40 percent points lower on standardized testing than their native English speaking peers (Menken 2008). This statistic questions not only the preparedness of English language learning and/or bilingual students in taking the tests, but more so the validity of these tests. When creating and norming populations for these specific tests, were English language learners taken into account when creating the test? Some may argue that this is the fault of students themselves, and that existence of programs like *No Child Left Behind* exist so that, well,

no child is left behind. On the contrary, Menken argues that acts such as *No Child Left Behind* and The Federal Education Policy Amendment of 1994 emphasize this testing culture which views English proficiency and acquisition of utmost importance over that of the native language. Therefore, these acts enforce rapid English language learning at the expense of the minority language and its preservation. Students are forced into an English dominant “testing culture” where their intelligence, performance, advancement and academic efforts are assessed from an English only lens. It can be assumed that this emphasis on English only acquisition as a standardized measure does not accurately reflect an English language learner or bilingual student’s intelligence. Therefore, the 20-40 average percentage points that an English language learner achieves on a standardized tests may actually keep them back from further advancement in their educational pursuits, such as graduation or acceptance, proving the contradictory nature of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (Menken 2008). The increase of bilingual programs should pave way to more valid testing measures and norms of bilingual students.

Similarly, the roots of testing culture have a questionable background. Standardized tests as a measure of knowledge and eligibility for classroom placement have been “historically tied to the status of immigrants and minorities, serving as a gatekeeper function that perpetuates the power of the dominant group” (Menken 14). This is in reference to H.H Goddard, who Menken explains used tests that were standardized on an English speaking population to measure the intelligence of Jewish immigrants arriving at Ellis Island in the 19th century. It was concluded that these immigrants were unintelligent based on their inability to successfully take a test in a language that was completely foreign to them. Similarly, literacy tests were administered to African Americans in the south during the Jim Crow law era. Taking advantage of the fact that

many African Americans did not have formal education, literacy was used as a prerequisite to vote in elections. Of course, many African Americans did not pass these tests due to the numerous educational inequalities that they faced, and therefore were ineligible to vote. It appears that this emphasis on standardized testing culture has continued to perpetuate into our modern day school systems.

Standardized testing must be valid, reliable and accurate and therefore norms should be collected on a variety of populations, not just the population of individuals who speak standard American English. Additionally, an official language policy must be implemented into schools to reinforce the sustainability and merit of not only English, but also the minority languages and dialects that exist in our country. The US lacks an official language policy, however it is evident that an unofficial language policy in US schools systems favors English proficiency at the expense of minority language, excluding the dual language, international, immersion, and heritage language schools discussed previously. A language policy with explicit goals needs to be implemented to address the needs of bilingual and English language learning students, such as valid and reliable testing norms for bilingual students. These needs must not solely address their English language proficiency, but also their proficiency in their native languages to get a more complete representation of the child's abilities. Additionally, criterion referenced measures of achievement may be a more holistic means of assessing English language learners without comparing them to the norms of native English speakers. This official language policy would include staff training, long term maintenance, and specific assessment measures that are valid, reliable, and accurate to the student's native languages, culture, and socio-economic background (Menken 2008).

While this bilingual and native language policy has merit, counter arguments still exist which question the importance of these bilingual school programs. Senator Walter Dee Huddleston of Kentucky, for example, attempted to reintroduce a language amendment to the constitution in 1983 (Tse 2001). Huddleston stated that “In countless places, differences in language have either caused or contributed significantly to political, social and economic instability (Tse 3). This argument is based on the inaccurate assumption that because people speak different languages, they are incapable of having the same viewpoints. Huddleston views the linguistic difference with this assumption that cohesion between different groups of people is not possible within the same country. This comes from a primitive, if not xenophobic, fear of those who are different, and the potential political, social, and economic threat that the lack of forced assimilation entails.

Hulit (2015) proposes a multicultural education policy in fostering language development. Hulit states that “the nation suffers whenever the education of its children is compromised, and the education of those who speak any language other than a standard dialect of American English is surely being compromised in many US schools today” (Hulit 372). By this Hulit is referring to an expectation that all children should and will speak a standard American English dialect classroom, and their ability to speak this dialect is indicative of their knowledge and is necessary for academic success. Many bilingual children who speak a different language at home than at school may present with a dialect different from that of Standard American English. Based on the variety of foreign languages spoken throughout the US, Hulit identifies that this expectation for students to all speak the same standard dialect in the academic environment is “as offensive as it is impractical” (Hulit 372). While curriculum does typically

require an educator to teach standard American English, this curriculum should be taught without sacrificing the culture, value, and dialect of the home community. This anti-bias, multicultural curriculum that Hult discusses in his text can easily be incorporated into a least-biased language policy. In a hypothetical situation, two students are presenting with African American Vernacular English and Standard American English. If the two students give the same answers to the question (therefore reflecting the same knowledge), one student should not receive a higher or lower score based upon the dialect used. Critics may argue that certain dialects, however, present with grammatically incorrect structures, and therefore are not viewed as academically appropriate. Stigmatizing a dialect for being different than the standard, however, discredits the natural process of language evolution. Similarly, discrediting dialects different from Standard American English poses an unnecessary and unethical barrier to an individual's potential advancement in society (see discussion of literacy tests and Jim Crow laws in the previous paragraph).

The personal experience of interviewing a third grade teacher in Newark, New Jersey, allows for greater understanding of language policy and testing within the classroom. I interviewed L.R., a 3rd grade teacher in the city of Newark, New Jersey. L.R reports that while English is the predominant language taught in the school, her students speak Spanish, Portuguese, and English in both the home and school setting. She also reports that while many teachers in the school also speak Portuguese and Spanish, the school has no official language policy and that the students are tested only in English. She argues that the standardized tests are not a fair measure of the student's academic ability. Specifically, she identifies comprehension of

texts and inference making as the two areas that her students struggle with the most on these tests.

To the reader, the struggles that these bilingual students exhibit through test taking may seem contradictory to the academic benefits of bilingualism discussed in the beginning of this paper. In this section of the paper I considered academic benefits of being multilingual, such as flexible and creative thinking, metalinguistic abilities, selective attention, analytical reasoning, and phonological awareness (Baker 2007, Hulit 2015). Why, then, are bilingual and English language learning students on average performing 20-40 percent points lower on standardized testing than their monolingual English speaking peers (Menken 2008)? It is evident that the lack of bilingual assessment measures is a cause (Menken 2008). Giving a student a test in one of their languages is not assessing the child's holistic academic and language abilities, only the constraints that are imposed by a monolingual testing culture. This type of tests unnaturally restrains the child's linguistic skills in one language, which leads to the child performing poorly on the test. Administering assessments in all of the child's languages would be a less bias means of assessing the child's academic ability. As Rhea Paul claims in her text *Introduction to Clinical methods to Communication Disorders*, "if a standardized test does not include individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse population in the standardized sample, you should question the test's validity" (Paul 299). This is a valid argument, since the sample size of bilingual or English language learning students should accurately reflect the percentage of bilingual or English language learning students in the overall population. Similarly, Paul discusses the prevalence of bilingual and English language learners in the caseloads of speech-language pathologists as 11.3% of total caseloads (Paul 2007). The use of standardized tests which include

an accurate percent of ELL and bilingual students in their sample size will be a more accurate reflection of how a child scores on a standardized test (Pindzola, et al. 2016).

Similarly, speech-language pathologists may lack the ability to speak the child's home language, least biased assessment materials, and developmental norms in the home language (Paul 2007). This discrepancy leads to many bilingual and English language learning students to be incorrectly treated for a communication disorder (specifically, a language disorder) that they may not have. Providing testing materials that accurately reflect a bilingual and English language learners linguistic abilities is a concrete means of valid assessment of these student's knowledge and abilities.

Similarly, the American Speech and Hearing Association states that "Individuals shall not discriminate in the delivery of professional services" (Bilingual Service Delivery). However, the lack of knowledge of a student's home language or lack of bilingual skills provides a great barrier that is commonly faced by speech-language pathologists. As clinicians, speech-language pathologists are obligated to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services to their clients, yet many of the clinicians lack the second language skills to assess and treat clients from diverse language backgrounds. In this case, a translator may be hired to assist in therapy. Even still, I propose that multilingualism is a critical skill that is necessary not only for the career of a speech-language pathologist but also for the proper assessment and treatment of a bilingual client. In fact, author C. Gildersleeve-Neumann concludes that "Treating both languages had an overall positive effect on these bilingual children's speech. Future bilingual intervention research should explore alternating treatments designs, efficiency of monolingual vs bilingual treatment, different language and bilingual backgrounds, and between-group comparisons"

(Gildersleeve-Neumann 1). This quote is in reference to a case study where the cross-linguistic generalization of bilingual language use in two 5 year old children with speech sound disorders was examined. Based on the results of this case study, bilingual language intervention undoubtedly has positive results for bilingual individuals with language disorders. In undertaking the process of bilingual language intervention, I propose there are certain concepts a clinician should keep in mind.

Bilingual speech-language pathologist should strive to create a equal balance of the languages used throughout therapy to prevent subtractive bilingualism, which occurs when skills or fluency in one language (usually the home language) is lost due to the dominance of the other language (ASHA.org). ASHA Bilingual Service Delivery states services that are given early on to differentiate between language disordered versus dual language. These services and methods include RTI, or Response to Intervention, and DA, or dynamic assessment (ASHA.org). These services of assessment are helpful in differentiating bilingual and ELL students with and without disorder. Even so, there are still bilingual or second language learning students who will be misidentified as language disordered and will be put on a speech-language pathologists caseload. It is possible for a bilingual or English language learner to, in fact, have a communication disorder, therefore providing services as a bilingual speech-language pathologist is key in this distinction. There are also key factors in diagnosing and treating bilingual clients, such as using criterion-referenced assessments, case histories relating to language and culture, and accommodations for testing materials. While these methodologies may seem straightforward in practice, they are not always as straightforward as they seem, as stated by Lu-Feng Shi in an interview with Francois Grosjean.

Shi reiterates that a bilingual person is not two separate monolinguals, therefore the results cannot be accurately compared to that of a monolingual. Shi states that the clinician must be equally proficient in both languages and “also need(s) two tests, one in English and the other in Spanish, for example, with comparable psychometric properties. We then need to administer each test in listening conditions that best simulate the situations in which these languages are used” (Grosjean 1). Therefore, there is a lot to take into account when undertaking bilingual assessment and intervention. The test must assess both languages, but not separately, while not comparing to the norms of monolingual counterparts, while having similar psychometric testing properties, while assessing language in dynamic situations where they are used. Due to all these challenges and constraints of assessment of bilingual speech and language, it is no wonder why bilingualism in the field is still such a considerably untapped area.

While bilingual speech language assessment and intervention in the field of Speech-Language Pathology are quite cumbersome tasks, they are not impossible to undertake. According to Pew Research Center, “(Spanish) is one of the fastest-growing (languages in the US), with the number of speakers up 233% since 1980, when there were 11 million Spanish speakers.” (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera 2013). This increase in foreign languages such as Spanish, Vietnamese, and Arabic in the US will lead to an increased demand on speech-language pathologists as well as classroom educators to provide their services in a multilingual fashion. Although several factors stand in the way of this feat, such as a conservative political climate, budgeting restrictions in school districts, and the uncertainties that arise from bilingual speech and language intervention, I propose that bilingual education and speech language services can be a sustainable system. In order for this bilingual education and speech-language model to be

sustainable, explicit goals and plans must be established. Based on Menken (2008), ways to create a sustainable bilingual education policy must answer the questions of which languages will be taught, how these languages will be implemented, and what are the orientations and beliefs towards these languages (Menken 2008). Additionally, schools must develop a language policy that is concrete. The schools must also be aware of the implications of programs like the *No Child Left Behind Act*, which reinforces English language development at the expense of the home language (Menken 2008). Additionally, language policy is a sustainable system as long as there is an existence of multilingual staff, staff training, and long term program maintenance (Menken 2008). In conclusion, bilingual education is a sustainable system with the existence of an official language policy, implementation of goals, long term program maintenance, and staff training. Given the increase of bilingual individuals in the US and the multitude of benefits that a bilingual education provides, it is of the utmost importance now more than ever to allow bilingual education programs to reach their full potential of becoming meaningful and sustainable education systems.

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