

Should Two Languages Continue to be used with Children with Diagnosed Language Disorders?

* Try to determine the cause of the problem. Rarely is it caused by bilingualism.

* Changing from bilingualism to monolingualism may worsen the problem. An immediate change in the home environment may cause emotional stress exacerbating the situation.

* If a change to monolingualism is required by the nature of the problem, the child's home language should be retained. Once the diagnosed problems have been remediated, bilingualism can be reintroduced.

Should I follow the Advice of Professionals who tell me to Raise my Children Monolingually?

* Many times the professionals who offer this advice are monolinguals who are not educated in bilingualism.

* Current research indicates that the positive benefits of raising bilingual children outweigh the negative.

Should my Child be Placed in a Bilingual Special Education Program?

* Insure that the child has been correctly diagnosed as having a disorder. At times the testing materials used to identify disorders are based on the majority language so the test does not accurately reflect the capabilities of a child using another language.

* If the child has been properly diagnosed with a disorder, then the child will benefit from a bilingual special education program, rather than a monolingual program.

Parent Resources:

- Amberg, L. (1987). Raising children bilingually: the preschool years. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Baker, C. (1995). A parents' and teachers' guide to bilingualism. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters LTD.
- Crystal, D. (1986). Listen to your child: A parent's guide to children's language. London: Penguin Books.
- De Jong, E. (1986). The bilingual experience: A book for parents. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harding, E., & Riley, P. (1986). The bilingual family: A handbook for parents. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Raising a Bilingual Child

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Advantages

- * Bilinguals can communicate with a wider variety of people than monolinguals.
- * Bilinguals have an opportunity to experience two or more cultures.
- * Bilinguals can build bridges to extended family who speak the ancestral language helping to create a sense of belonging and rootedness to the family and culture.
- * Bilinguals may have an economic advantage as businesses become more multinational requiring the services of individuals who can speak multiple languages and have knowledge of various cultures.

Disadvantages

- * Children will be at a disadvantage when both languages are underdeveloped so that the child cannot cope in the school curriculum.
- * Raising a bilingual child takes effort and planning on the part of the parents to insure adequate exposure to both languages.
- * A bilingual child may experience identity problems, not knowing with which culture she or he is identified.

Normal Development in Each Language

- * Each child's language development varies and is dependent upon the amount of exposure to each language.
- * Learning two languages may be a slower process than learning one, but the developmental stages for each language are the same.

* Normal language development patterns:

- 1 year - First understandable words
- 2 years- Two-word combinations, increasing to three- and four-word combinations.
- 3 years- Increasingly longer sentences which reflect normal grammar.
- 4 years- Increasingly more complex sentences.

Impact of Second Language on First Language

- * Knowledge developed in one language can be accessed through a second language once the vocabulary has been learned. The concepts do not have to be retaught in the second language.
- * Children may initially mix words from both languages, but the interference is temporary.
- * Children may not have as large of a vocabulary as a monolingual, but the combined number of words from the two vocabulary systems are greater than that of a monolingual.

Impact of Bilingualism on Cultural Identity

- * There are three basic types of cultural identity seen in bilinguals.
 1. Bicultural—the bilingual is able to switch easily between the two cultures.
 2. Minority culture rootedness—the bilingual firmly maintains their roots in their culture.
 3. Dislocation—the bilingual no longer has roots to the home culture and has not developed a connection to the majority culture.
- * The bilingual child should be given experiences in the home culture to offset the overabundance of experiences they will be exposed to in the majority culture.

Effect of Bilingualism on Social Development

- * Bilinguals tend to have an advantage in social relationships. They are able to interact with a wider variety of people and develop more diverse friendships.
- * Prejudice of minority language speakers by majority language users may occur. Teachers and parents should help to facilitate understanding and acceptance of differences.

Bilingualism and Learning Difficulties

- * Bilingualism is rarely the cause of learning difficulties. Language based learning difficulties can occur when neither language is sufficiently developed for the child to succeed in the school curriculum.
- * Even children who learn at a slower pace can still develop skills in two languages.

Does Bilingualism Cause Stuttering?

- * There is no evidence that stuttering is caused by bilingualism.
- * If a parent is anxious about the child's language development, this anxiety may be passed to the child, making language learning no longer an enjoyable experience.

