DUAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT in PRESCHOOL CHILDREN: THE CAPACITY ISSUE

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MY GOAL

• To review research relevant to the question of young children’s capacity to acquire more than one language:
  ⇒ what children can do

• Focus on acquisition in non-school settings

1) Typically-developing children: 0-5 YEARS OF AGE
   ○ research on early pre-verbal and verbal development

2) Children with developmental disorders (0-5 and older)
   ○ children with specific language impairment (SLI)
   ○ Down Syndrome (DS)
   ○ Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
1) TYPICALLY-DEVELOPING NEWBORNS are neuro-cognitively prepared to learn more than one language

Evidence:
- Early language differentiation & preferences
- Early speech perception
- Early word segmentation
- Early word learning strategies
- Grammatical development
PRE-SCHOOL BILINGUALS

MONOLINGUAL MILESTONES

- word segmentation (7 mths)
- babbling (10-12 m
- first words (12mths)
- vocabulary spurt (18mths)
- word comb. (24mths)
- grammar/communicat’n (beyond)

MILESTONES FOR BILINGUALS ARE THE SAME

Genesee & Nicoladis (2006)
2) SAME GENERAL LEARNING STRATEGIES AS MONOLINGUALS + FLEXIBILITY

EVIDENCE OF FLEXIBLE USE OF STRATEGIES:

• Use facial cues specific to each language to separate the languages

• Use prosodic features of each language to determine word order constraints in each

• acquire alternate labels for same concepts (violate mutual exclusivity constraint)
3) YOUNG BILINGUALS ARE NOT CONFUSED BY DUAL LANGUAGE INPUT

• They differentiate between their input languages and a foreign language within days of birth

• They prefer to listen to input languages over unfamiliar languages

• They acquire grammars that are specific and appropriate for each language

• They use each language differentially and appropriately with speakers of each language

• They avoid grammatical errors when they code-mix
4) COMPETENCE OF YOUNG BILINGUALS MUST CONSIDER BOTH LANGUAGES

- Young bilingual children often lag monolingual children if only one language is examined; the dominant language is a better indicator of competence than the non-dominant language.

- Competence is often the same or better if both languages are assessed (vocabulary, grammar, discourse skills).

- Current proficiency in each language depends on current exposure – that is, child’s strengths and weaknesses in each language depends on exposure to each language.
5) BILINGUAL CHILDREN ARE DIFFERENT FROM MONOLINGUALS

Differences may reflect:

- different learning environments: amount of input, who provides the input, consistency of input

- specific properties of the input languages (similarity in sounds, words, grammar, discourse)

- use of bilingual-specific learning strategies
NEURO-COGNITIVE PROCESSING of a SECOND LANGUAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monolingual</th>
<th>Bilingual</th>
<th>Adoptee</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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AT-RISK LEARNERS

**Commonsense view:**

learning an L2 is a burden for at-risk learners and jeopardizes language development

**Alternative view:**

children with language learning difficulties will have the same difficulties whether they learn 2 languages or only 1

At-Risk Language Learners

– Specific language impairment
– Down Syndrome
– Autism Spectrum Disorder
1) All groups exhibited the same kind and pattern of difficulties in comparison to typically-developing (TD) children
⇒ NO unique effects

2) simultaneous bilinguals in all groups: $\text{BIL} =/> \text{MONO}$

3) successive bilinguals in all groups: $\text{BIL}^* =/> \text{MONO}$
   * if tested in dominant language or both

4) L2 of at-risk groups: $\text{BIL}< \text{MONO}$ (sometimes) *
   * L2 was often weaker language; but reports provide insufficient information
FRENCH-ENGLISH BILINGUALS with SPECIFIC LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT (SLI)


bilinguals with SLI*
(8-years old)

Fr monos with SLI
Eng monos with SLI
RESULTS

a) **Severity of impairment:**
   bilingual children = monolingual children
   (in English & French)

b) **Patterns of impairment:**
   bilingual children = monolingual children
   (in English & French)
SPANISH-ENGLISH CHILDREN WITH LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT
(Gutierrez-Clellen & Wagner, 2006)

BILINGUAL CHILDREN

typically-developing
(Eng. Dominant)

typically-developing
(Sp. Dominant)

impaired development
(Eng. Dominant)

ENGLISH-L1 CHILDREN

Mono
Typically-Developing

Mono
impaired development

NO DIFF
CHILDREN WITH DOWN SYNDROME

(Kay-Raining Bird, Cleave, Trudeau, Thordardottir, Sutton, & Thorpe, 2005)

Bilingual Children

Typically Developing

Down Syndrome

Monolingual Children

Typically Developing

Down Syndrome

NO DIFF.
CAVEAT!

ALL CHILDREN ARE DIFFERENT

EACH CHILD SHOULD BE CONSIDERED INDIVIDUALLY
IMPLICATIONS

خدام children with DD have the capacity to learn two languages and should be given the opportunity to do so, IF other conditions are favorable:

- **Language environment**: Is there sufficient access to both languages?
- **Community**: What is the use of or need for L2?
- **Family**: What is the significance of L2 in the nuclear and extended family?
- **School**: Can the school provide the additional support child needs?
- **Parents**: Do parents have the resources, energy & patience?
- **Individual differences**: Does the child have predisposition to cope with their additional learning challenges?
thank you
thank you

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