

MYTH vs. FACT

Bilingual Language Development



MYTH

FACT

Speaking 2 or more languages to a child can "confuse" them, so it is better to only speak 1 language.

All children are capable of learning multiple languages, including children with developmental delays and learning disabilities.

It is better for families to only speak the language taught in school to their children, even if they do not speak the language well.

Families should speak the language they are most comfortable speaking, so children are given rich linguistic models and can interact best with other members of their community.

Young bilingual children are delayed in learning language compared to peers who only speak 1 language.

Bilingualism does NOT cause language delays, and has been shown to improve children's ability to learn new words, identify sounds, and problem-solve.

Bilingual children should not mix parts of the languages they speak.

"Translanguaging" occurs when individuals grammatically mix aspects of the languages they speak. It fosters cultural and metalinguistic awareness.

Children become bilingual just by listening to people around them speaking the second language.

Learning language is an active process that requires many opportunities for children to practice communicating in context with others. Listening and responding are both crucial for developing competence.

If you are concerned about the language, speech, or communication development of someone you know, contact a speech-language pathologist for a comprehensive assessment.

Citations:

1. Bird, E. K. R., Cleave, P., Trudeau, N., Thordardottir, E., Sutton, A., & Thorpe, A. (2005). The language abilities of bilingual children with Down syndrome. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 14(3), 187-199.
2. Celic, C., & Seltzer, K. (2011). *Translanguaging: A CUNY-NYSIEB guide for educators*. New York, NY: The Graduate Center.
3. Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford University.
4. Roseberry-McKibbin, C. (2014). *Multicultural students with special language needs: Practical strategies for assessment and intervention* (4th ed.). Oceanside, CA: Academic Communication Associates.