

**Growing Up Bilingually:  
Opportunities, Challenges, and Achievements**

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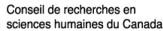

Paola **Colozzo**, Ph.D., RSLP, Assistant Professor  
Stefka **Marinova-Todd**, Ed.D., Associate Professor  
UBC School of Audiology and Speech Sciences

Part 1

**Bilingualism, Context and Children with  
Developmental Disabilities:**

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Insights from an International Collaboration

 Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada  Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada 

**Bilingualism is everywhere**

Bilingualism is the norm

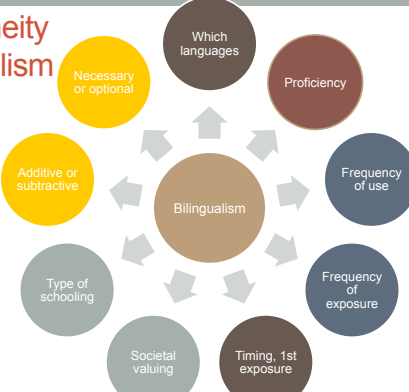
- nearly two thirds of the world's population speak two or more languages (Crystal, 2006)

Growth in migration means that an **increasing** proportion of people in (Western) countries speak a language other than the country's official language at home and increasingly in the community

**Defining 'bilinguals'**

- “Those people who need and use two (or more) languages in their everyday lives”  
(Grosjean, 1992)
- This definition
  - Emphasizes **language use**, not language proficiency
  - Is appropriate for ***all children***

**Heterogeneity of Bilingualism**



Baker (2011);  
Paradis, Genesee,  
& Crago (2011)

**Children with developmental disabilities  
growing up in bilingual contexts**

- **Necessity:** Knowledge of more than one language is essential for many children with DD to function daily
- **Choice:** Bilingualism is not always critical—parents may still consider it a form of enrichment, an asset  
(King & Fogle, 2006)

### Project Goals

- To review the literature on context and its impact on bilingual development in children with DD
- To describe the bilingual context across 6 sites
- To assess the access and participation of these children to bilingual services and programs

In doing so,

- To set the groundwork for future studies

### Focus of today's presentation

- **Policies** affecting opportunities for children with DD to become bilingual
- **Surveys of interventionists** regarding practices and their opinions

Country/Site	Population (larger census area)	Majority/ official language(s)	% minority languages	3 most frequent minority languages
Canada	33,476,688			
Halifax	390,328	English French (< 3%)	6%	Chinese, Arabic, German
Montreal	3,824,221	French English (12%)	32%	Arabic, Spanish, Italian
Vancouver	2,313,328	English French (< 2%)	45%	Chinese, Punjabi, Tagalog
USA	321,671,680			
Albuquerque	656,726	English	30%	Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic
UK	64,596,800			
Manchester	2,682,500	English	17%	Urdu, Arabic, Polish
Netherlands	16,984,133			
Nijmegen	283,097	Dutch	25%	Turkish, Arabic, Berber

### POLICIES AFFECTING OPPORTUNITIES TO BECOME BILINGUAL

### Overview

What are the language-learning opportunities available to children with developmental disabilities?

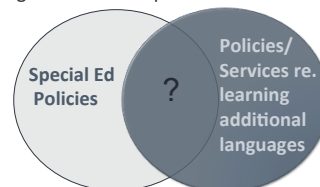
These opportunities can influence:

- whether children become bilingual adults
- whether they experience *subtractive bilingualism* or *additive bilingualism*

(Baker, 2011)

### Goal

- Summarize education policies to identify support for bilingualism for children with DD
- Look for overlaps between
  - Special education policies
  - Language-in-education policies



## Methods

- Review of **government documents**
- **Sources:**
  - Government websites
    - federal, regional, provincial/state, local as appropriate
  - Primarily Education
    - but also from Health and Social Services
- **Common search terms** across sites
- Searches completed between **2012-2013**
  - Documents updated when major changes occurred

## *Explicit statements of language-learning opportunities in the special education policies*

- Special education policies **rarely** explicitly addressed bilingual opportunities
- However, inclusive education policies at all sites state that children with DD **should not be discriminated against or excluded** from educational opportunities

⇒ By implication, bilingual opportunities for children with DD are supported in policy

## *Explicit statements of the needs of students with DD in the language-in education policies*

- Lol policies **occasionally** included children with DD explicitly
- The **need to provide both Lol supports** (e.g., ESL) **and special education services** is stated across sites.
- There are 'opt-out' options for children with DD from 2<sup>nd</sup> language classes, generally at parental request

## *Conclusions*

- Policies at all sites
  - Included the **principles** that children with DD
    - Should be included in the regular educational classroom
    - Should to access the full range of educational opportunities
  - Noted the need to provide appropriate supports
- However, wide variation in % of children with DD who were in a 'regular' class most of the time
- Policies that dealt with bilingualism rarely explicitly discussed children with DD

- As a result of **lack of support for L1**, all minority language speakers, but children with DD most likely even more so
  - are at **risk of losing L1** (Wong Fillmore, 2000)
  - may experience **slowed development of L2** due to decreased potential for linguistic transfer
  - may experience (greater) **academic difficulties** when combined with **insufficient support of the Lol**
- Supports for learning a 2<sup>nd</sup> language that was more optional were less clear

- At all sites, some children with DD for whom Lol = L1 could potentially learn another language through language classes or immersion
- Not clear that the policies translate directly to practice
  - Some evidence, that French immersion programming has catered to an elite student body—high achieving and high SES (Arnett & Mady, 2010; Wilms, 2008)
  - Interview data suggest that it is often left up to parents to initiate a request for such services

## ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION: EVIDENCE FROM SURVEYS

### Purpose

Gather information about **practices** and **opinions** pertaining to the provision of **bilingual supports** to **students with developmental disabilities** compared to typically-developing children

### Process

- Surveys were disseminated via agencies (school boards, day cares), professional organizations and networks
- Respondents were school- and clinic-based professionals

### Majority language of instruction

- In 5 sites, language of the workplace matched majority language of instruction
  - **English** in Albuquerque, Halifax, Manchester, Vancouver
  - **Dutch** in the Netherlands
- In **Montreal**, we only obtained sufficient data from respondents where English was the primary language in the workplace

### Participants

- 361 surveys were included

Albuquerque, NM	36
Halifax, CA	61
Manchester, UK	45
Montreal, CA	23
Netherlands	77
Vancouver, CA	119

- Not all respondents answered every question, however.

### Results/Discussion

- In general, respondents believed that children with both mild and severe disabilities **are capable of learning a second language**
  - their opinions were more neutral about this for the latter group
- The overall picture that emerged
  - reflected a **disconnection between opinion and practice**
  - suggested that the **needs** of bilingual students with developmental disabilities are **not adequately addressed**

- A few, mostly explainable, **site differences** emerged
  - In **Albuquerque** opinions in support of increased bilingual services and availability were among the strongest
    - 44% of respondents spoke second language
    - bilingual services are highly defined and overseen by policy
  - In **Halifax**, English-only exposure, assessment, and treatment was most common
    - smallest bilingual population compared to the other sites

- In **Montreal**, there was often a closer match between practice and opinion than in the other sites
  - a predominantly bilingual city
  - vast majority of both survey respondents (91%) and the population in general learn to speak both French and English and do so regularly
- In **Vancouver**, both practice and opinion about participating in language classes were markedly different for the TD, mild, and severe groups
  - access to language classes is generally widespread and also some access to immersion

Despite these differences, there was **considerable agreement on both practice and opinion responses across sites**, suggesting that access to bilingual services and supports is less than adequate for students with developmental disabilities internationally.

- Professional **opinions** generally **in line with available research**
  - Prioritize learning of the language of instruction over optional 2LL
  - Promote better access to bilingual support for everyone
- Professionals appear to be more **supportive of bilingual educational opportunities** for this population than was suggested by previous research

### Children with DD Need Access and Support

- Across sites
  - Many accommodations for children with DD
    - Accommodations for bilingualism < accommodations for DD: *the whole person needs attention*
  - Children with DD do not have the same access to language programs and supports as TD children
  - Professionals recognize restricted access is a problem
    - But see it as less of a problem if children have severe disabilities

### If you would like to know more...

- Upcoming **Special Issue** in the *Journal of Communication Disorders*:
  - **The road to bilingualism: Access, participation, and supports for children with special needs across contexts**
    - Five articles
    - 2 commentaries

## Acknowledgements

### Large team

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## PART 2 TWO STUDIES

## Bilingualism and children with ASD

- No differences observed between bilinguals and monolinguals on:
  - Age of language milestones (Ohashi et al., 2012)
  - Early receptive and expressive vocabulary (Petersen, Marinova-Todd and Mirenda, 2012)
  - Early morphology and syntax (Hambly and Fombonne, 2012; Ohashi et al., 2012)
  - Social communication (Hambly and Fombonne, 2012; Ohashi et al., 2012)

## PRAGMATIC SKILLS OF BILINGUAL AND MONOLINGUAL CHILDREN WITH ASD

Tracy Lam, M.Sc.

## Study objective

To determine whether there is a difference in pragmatic skills between bilingual and monolingual children with ASD

## Discussion

- No difference in measures of pragmatic skills between monolingual and bilingual children with ASD at age 8.5 – 9
- Consistent with previous research focused on younger children with ASD (Hambly & Fombonne, 2012, Ohashi et al., 2012, Petersen, Marinova-Todd & Mirenda, 2012)
- Supports that bilingualism does not impede language development in children with ASD

## EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING BEHAVIOURS IN BILINGUAL AND MONOLINGUAL CHILDREN WITH ASD

Stefanie Macaro, M. Sc.

## Research Questions

- 1) Is there a difference in EF skills between monolingual and bilingual children with ASD?
- 2) Is there a difference in academic achievement between monolingual and bilingual children with ASD?
- 3) Is there an association between EFs and academic achievement in either monolingual or bilingual children with ASD?

## Conclusions

- a bilingual language environment is not detrimental to children's EF behaviours or school success, even when the child also has a diagnosis of ASD.
- No difference between group on EF tasks or measures of academic achievement
- Different associations between EF and academic achievement in bilinguals and monolinguals – future research to explore further

## General Conclusion

- Children with ASD can be successful bilinguals
  - Bilingual exposure would not hurt them
- Parents' values and language abilities should be a priority
- As far as we know, ASD does not present differently in bilingual children
- For other clinical populations, bilingual intervention supports bilingualism socially and therapeutically
- Limited access and support for children with ASD in language programs in schools
  - Severity plays an important role in decision-making

## THANK YOU!

paola.colozzo@audiospeech.ubc.ca

stefka@audiospeech.ubc.ca