

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 who mix languages ("code switch") are confused and sound uneducated.

Language mixing, also known as "code switching", is normal and grammatical. It serves social and communicative purposes, while also fostering cultural and linguistic awareness.

Bilingual children who stop speaking their first language have a language disorder or learning disability.

"Language loss" occurs during bilingual language acquisition when a child is exposed to a second language more consistently than their first language. It is not a sign of disorder or disability.

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. Auer, P. (Ed.). (2013). Code-switching in conversation: Language, interaction and identity. Routledge.
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3. Mehisto, P., & Marsh, D. (2011). Approaching the economic, cognitive and health benefits of bilingualism: Fuel for CLIL. *Content and foreign language integrated learning*, 21-47.
4. Roseberry-McKibbin, C. (1995). Distinguishing Language Differences from Language Disorders in Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students. *Multicultural Education*, 2(4), 12-16.

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