MYTH vs. FACT
Bilingual Language Development

**MYTH**

- Speaking 2 or more languages to a child can "confuse" them, so it is better to only speak 1 language.
- 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.
- Young bilingual children are delayed in learning language compared to peers who only speak 1 language.
- Bilingual children who mix languages ("code switch") are confused and sound uneducated.
- Bilingual children who stop speaking their first language have a language disorder or learning disability.

**FACT**

- All children are capable of learning multiple languages, including children with developmental delays and learning disabilities.
- 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.
- Bilingualism does NOT cause language delays, and has been shown to improve children’s ability to learn new words, identify sounds, and problem-solve.
- Language mixing, also known as “code switching”, is normal and grammatical. It serves social and communicative purposes, while also fostering cultural and linguistic awareness.
- “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.

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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:

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