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Resource Article

This month, we continue our investigation of ways to support young children from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The article, "Intervention with Linguistically Diverse Preschool Children: A focus on developing home language(s)" by Kohnert, Yim, Nett, Kan & Duran, provides a review of literature that underscores the importance of including home language in intervention.

The authors report many reasons for supporting the home language. Home language is seen as the means for communicating unique family messages, making it the common language for expressing all essential parent-child interactions. In addition to aspects related to social, emotional and cognitive development within the cultural context of the family, the authors found that typical developing children might also experience regression when the home language is not systematically supported. Typically developing children may be at risk for academic delay when they have not yet established a foundation in their first language.

Although research into linguistically diverse preschoolers is limited, the authors note that instruction in a child's home language supports a child's success in later instruction delivered in English. This led the research team to ask the question, "Are children with language impairments capable of learning two languages?" While empirical studies are limited, the authors discovered that working to increase home language skills in children with language impairments does not appear to negatively affect learning the majority language.

Kohnert, et al. suggest general intervention strategies for supporting the home language. Ideally, a provider proficient in the family's home language would provide services in the home language. However, it is not necessary for intervention to be provided at the same time in both languages nor in the same way; this is especially noteworthy as many providers are not bilingual and do not speak a family's home language. The authors make the case for training of parents and other caregivers to use peer mediated intervention strategies to support the home language for children with language impairments. They found a number of common qualities that seem to represent successful parent training programs: (1) focus on specific language facilitation strategies (e.g., language expansion, follow a child's lead, etc.); (2) incorporate multiple instructional methods (e.g., video with feedback, direct teaching, role playing, etc.); (3) be systematic in their approach (e.g., using a progression of skills and strategies embedded in specific activities); (4) tailor the program to fit the needs of the child and family; and (5) focus on helping the parent generalize the strategies in the home language.

Peer-mediated intervention strategies highlight naturalistic linguistic and social opportunities inherent between children (and siblings). Considerate pairing of child with a language impairment with a typically developing child and/or sibling of the same home language in

thoughtful play settings (e.g., with carefully selected play materials/books) can facilitate home language and lay the groundwork for additional language learning.

Supporting the home language appears crucial in providing a young child a fertile foundation for future language learning. Although bilingual skills are not prerequisite in working with linguistically diverse families with young children, the ability to support the home language by effectively communicating about language intervention strategies and modifying these strategies accordingly is and should be applied.

Kohnert, K., Yim, D., Nett, K., Kan, & Duran, L. (2005). Intervention with Linguistically Diverse Preschool Children: A focus on developing home language(s). Language, Speech and Hearing Services in Schools, 36, 251-263.

On the WWW

The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs site presents an extensive online resource library. The library has a search engine that allows you to tailor your search. In addition to the searchable database there are webinars, data resources, and multiple publications. Check it out at: http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/rcd/

What do the Data Say?

How has diversity changed in the United States over the past ten years?

To answer this question we look to the US Census Bureau and specifically a report published in March 2011 titled "Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2012," by Humes, Jones, and Ramirez. The source of data for this report was the 2010 Census.

In 2010 respondents answered a question about their Hispanic or Latino origin (Hispanic or Latino or Not Hispanic or Latino). In addition, data on race were collapsed into five categories, White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Some Other Race. The results of these questions on the 2010 Census indicated that "more than half of the growth in the total population of the United States between 2000 and 2010 was due to the increase in the Hispanic population" (p. 3). Between this period, the Hispanic population grew from 12.5% of the total population in 2000 to 16.3% in 2010.

The following table shows the different race categories and the percentage of the total population in 2000 and 2010.

	2000	2010
White	75.1%	72.4%
Black/ African American	12.3%	12.6%
American Indian/ Alaska Native	0.9%	0.9%
Asian	3.6%	4.8%
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.2%
Some other Race	5.5%	6.2%

Among these population changes, the Asian population grew faster than other groups. The Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander group grew by more than one-third. While the population size of the White population grew from 211 million to 223 million the percentage of the total population dropped from 75.1% to 72.4%.

It is clear that the population is changing and becoming more and more diverse. To learn more details about these changes see the full report online.

Humes, K. R., Jones, N. A., & Ramirez, R. R. (2011). Overview of Race and Hispanic Roigin: 2010. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC. Retrieved August 2012 from http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf

Consultation Corner

Beginning this month through December 2012, we are excited and honored to have Dr. Lillian Durán and Terry Kohlmeier as our consultation corner experts. They will be addressing the topic *Dual Language Learners in Early Intervention.*

In general, the US is becoming a much more culturally and linguistically diverse nation. Practitioners everywhere are working with families whose primary language is other than English. Military personnel and their children are stationed all over the world and are exposed to a diverse array of languages. According to the 2010 US Census, close to a quarter of the young children in the United States alone are growing up in families where English is not the primary language. In a world where there are probably as many dual language children as there are monolingual children, this can present both challenges and opportunities for early interventionists.

Does learning two or more languages confuse young children (Birth to Three) and cause language delays?

Before we begin to delve into this important question, first, it is important to recognize that dual language learners can differ from one another: Dual language learners are those who are learning more than one language. There are two types:

1. **Simultaneous Bilinguals**: These are children who are exposed to, and given opportunities to learn two languages from birth or shortly after. These children are exposed to both languages fairly regularly during the first 3 years of life.
2. **Sequential Bilinguals**: These are the children who are exposed to a second language after they have acquired their first language. This usually means that the second language is introduced after the age of 3 (Paradis, Genesee, & Crago, 2010).

These are important categories and each will have unique developmental features. Consider the amount of exposure the young child has to all of the languages in their environments. What is the quality of that input and what is the goal of the family? Do they want a bilingual child? What supports will be offered? We know that early childhood is the best time to learn a second language since young children are more likely to master that language to achieve native like proficiency. However, this also means that young children will need lots of exposure, repetition and comprehensible input and opportunities to use the languages they are exposed to in meaningful contexts. If the goal is to raise a bilingual child then it is important to be mindful to provide ample opportunities for practice in both languages.

Being bilingual will not cause language delay. Although one might assume that learning more than one language during the first three years of life might confuse a child, recent research provides contrary evidence. Dr. Linda Espinosa in her article, *Challenging Common Myths About Young English Language Learners,* highlights the fact that young children throughout the world have successfully learned more than one language from their earliest years. In addition, she writes about the most recent brain research that describes the impact of learning two languages during the infant and toddler years.

Brain research shows us that learning two languages benefits the brain by enhancing that part of the brain related to language, memory and attention. Studies show that young children learning two languages also have more neural connections in the parts of the brain associated with language processing (Espinosa, 2008). Additional research suggests that being bilingual promotes cognitive thinking skills and increased brain activity. It is interesting to note that there is strong agreement that bilingual infants develop two separate but connected linguistic systems during the first year of life (Paradis et al., 2010). There are numerous studies that have shown that knowing more than one language does not delay the

acquisition of English or hinder academic achievement in English when both languages are supported (Goldenber, 2008; Paradis et al., 2010).

Language is connected to culture. Whether the child is coming from a bilingual home environment or is exposed to the language of the host country, it is important to understand that language is connected to culture. Children are socialized into their culture through language. Culture and language are interwoven in the upbringing of a child (Paradis et al., 2010). While the child is exposed to new languages they are also being exposed to new cultures. Think about how the child is adapting to new circumstances such as adult-child interactions patterns and expectations of young children cross-culturally in addition to the new language demands they might be encountering. Understand how this might influence the child's language usage, performance, and their developmental patterns.

Keep in mind that children who are dual language learners that have a true language delay or disorder will show signs in both of their languages because these issues are caused by biological or developmental factors that have an effect on the entire language learning system. If a child shows a delay in only one language, there are environmental factors to consider, such as the child who gets more input in one language over the other, or a child who feels shy and doesn't want to speak, or perhaps there is not a lot of conversation or language use in the child's home (Nemeth, 2012).

If children have not grown up with two languages and they have recently been introduced to a second language remember performance can vary in each language based on the timing of exposure to their second language and the quality and quantity of input they have had in each.

What factors may affect a child's rate of first and second language acquisition?

- Parents educational history & or literacy status.
- Socio-cultural status
- Socio-economic status
- The dominant language in the community, whether it is the majority or minority language
- Family circumstances
- How many languages are spoken fluently in the home from the child's birth
- Whether or not bilingualism is seen as an option or choice

Should children with language delays or other developmental disabilities be exposed to more than one language?

Currently there is no evidence that learning more than one language "confuses" a child. If a child has language delays or other developmental disorders and they are being exposed to a second language think through the language learning support that is in place in those environments. The idea that dual language learning is a problem because children have a limited capacity for language acquisition has been contradicted by current research evidence.

Paradis and colleagues in their book, "Dual Language Development & Disorders," clearly state that there is no evidence that bilingualism causes language impairment. Each family must decide based on the needs of their own family, whether or not their child with a language or developmental delay should learn a second language. The family should consider the circumstances they find themselves in and the options available to them. For some children who grow up in bilingual homes it is a necessity and not a choice, but for others it may be an intentional decision.

If the child is growing up in a bilingual environment needs more than one language to communicate across natural environments and with primary caregivers then maintaining the home language can be important for the child's social and emotional well-being and family relationships. In addition, supporting both

languages can be a benefit for the child's second language acquisition and cognitive development. According to Paradis et al., a sudden shift from a dual to a single language environment for a bilingual child with a language impairment could be detrimental. This is because the child could lose the ability to rely on cross-language interdependence. Removing the home language in an environmental context could also mean that the child would receive less rich and complex language input from parents.

Research has shown that children with low levels of general intelligence who participate in second/foreign language immersion programs score at the same level as comparable students in native language on standardized tests of reading, writing, and spelling administered in their native language. Their scores in the second language are where they would be expected to be given their cognitive limitations. This indicates that second language learning does not interfere with their acquisition of skills despite their lower cognitive ability. The authors point out that there is little research specifically with this population. However, based on their expertise they assert that children with severe cognitive deficits can learn a second language, but will need significant input outside of the school environment and will probably need to begin at an early age.

In summary, it is suggested that the consequences of bilingualism are dependent, in part, on the levels of language proficiency that bilingual children attain in their two languages. The implication for practice is that we should be supporting the foundation for high levels of proficiency in BOTH of the child's languages.

As your work continues with military families and their young children you have a unique opportunity to assist in raising global citizens who have many worldly experiences at young ages. Capitalize on the gifts of the many languages and cultures you may have the opportunity to work with in your practice. Research findings indicate that there are no harmful effects from early exposure to a second language and in fact there is evidence that there can be cognitive benefits (Bialystok, Craik, & Ryan, 2006). So support the child in their acquisition of a second language. In the future, they may be able to draw on this as a competitive asset in their schooling and employment opportunities.

Bialystok, E., Craik, F.I.M., & Ryan, J. (2006). "Executive control in a Modified Antisaccade Task: Effects of Aging and Bilingualism," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition,* Vol. 32, No.6. 1341-1354.

Espinosa, L M. (2008). Challenging Common Myths About Young English Language Learners. *Foundation for Child Development: Advancing PK-3.* No. 8, 4.

Goldenberg, C. (2008). Improving achievement for English language learners. In S. B. Neuman (Ed.). *Educating the Other America* (pp.139-162). Baltimore: Brookes.

Nemeth, K. N. (2012). Basics of Supporting Dual Language Learners. Washington, D.C. National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Paradis, J. ,Genesee, F. & Crago, M.B. (2010). Dual Language Development and Disorders: A Handbook on Bilingualism & Second Language Learning, 2nd ed. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Continuing Education for KIT Readers

The Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) is offering a continuing education opportunity for KIT readers.

In line with the focus on *Dual Language Learners in Early Intervention*, readers are invited to receive continuing education contact hours for reading the monthly KIT publications (August through November 2012) and completing a multiple-choice exam about the content covered in these KITs.

If you are interested simply complete the exam online at www.edis.army.mil. Upon successful completion of the exam, you will receive a certificate of non-discipline specific continuing education contact hours.

Thank you for your continued interest in the KIT. Please share your KIT questions/ideas via email to

ediscspd@amedd.army.mil