LEARNING IN TWO LANGUAGES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: WHAT EVERY EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL NEEDS TO KNOW

Mileidis Gort, Ed.D.

The Ohio State University

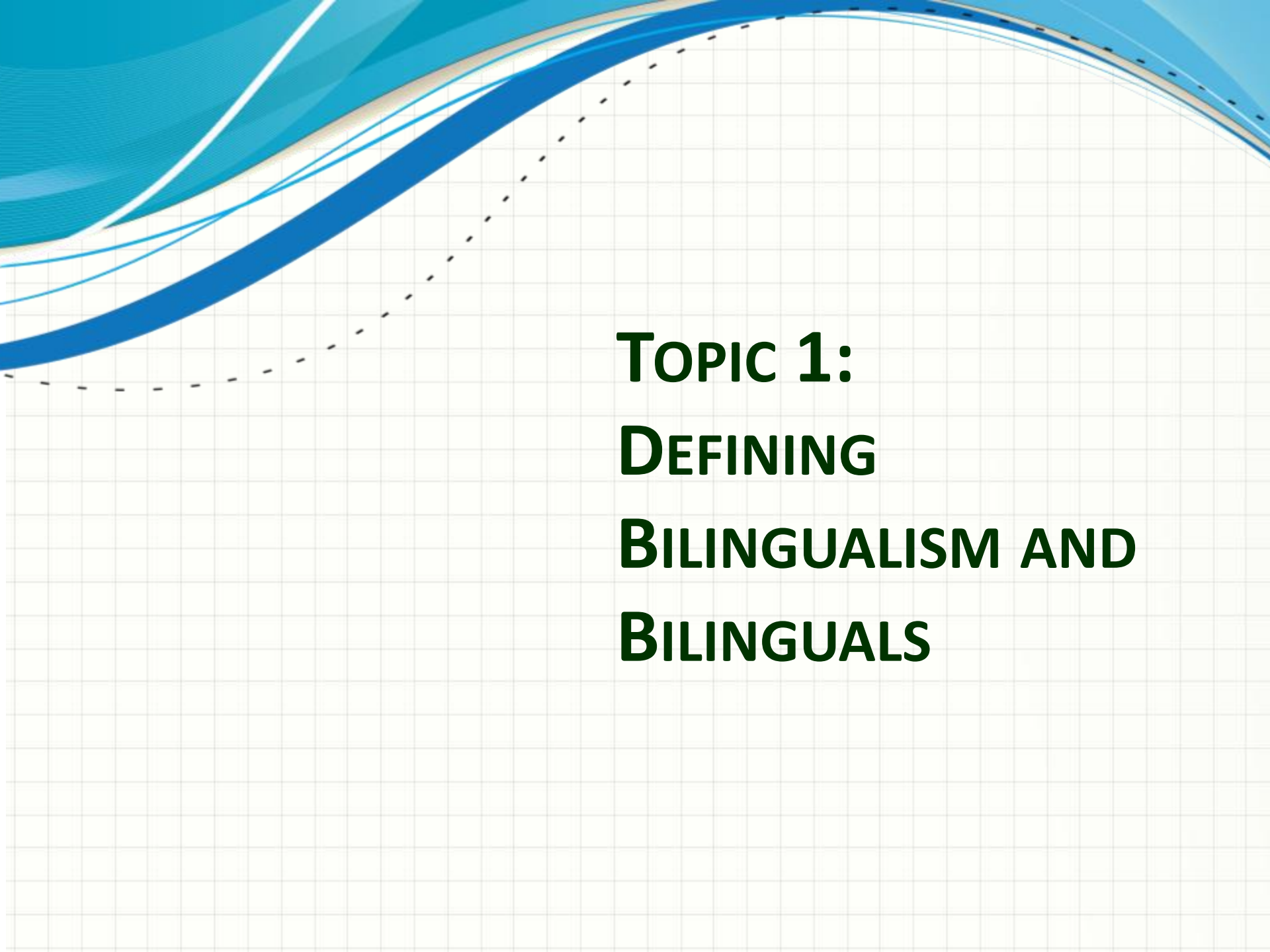# Welcome

Overview of Topics

1 • Types of bilinguals

2 • Pathways to bilingualism

3 • Stages of bilingual development

4 • Typical and atypical markers of bilingual development

TOPIC 1: DEFINING BILINGUALISM AND BILINGUALS

Defining Bilingualism

- Bilingualism is not only about proficiency in two languages
- Bilingualism is about proficiency, use, and experience
  - Each language serves different purpose/s
  - Each language is used in different places, with different people
  - Each language is a different tool for a different job!

Defining Bilinguals

• Bilinguals know more than one language to _different degrees_ and use these languages for a _variety of purposes_.

• A bilingual child is …

someone who is _exposed_ to two languages no matter what her level of proficiency in either language.

Young bilinguals are active, creative, and flexible learners and users of two (or more) languages.

POLL QUESTION 1

CHILDREN ARE BORN READY TO LEARN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES.

TRUE OR FALSE?
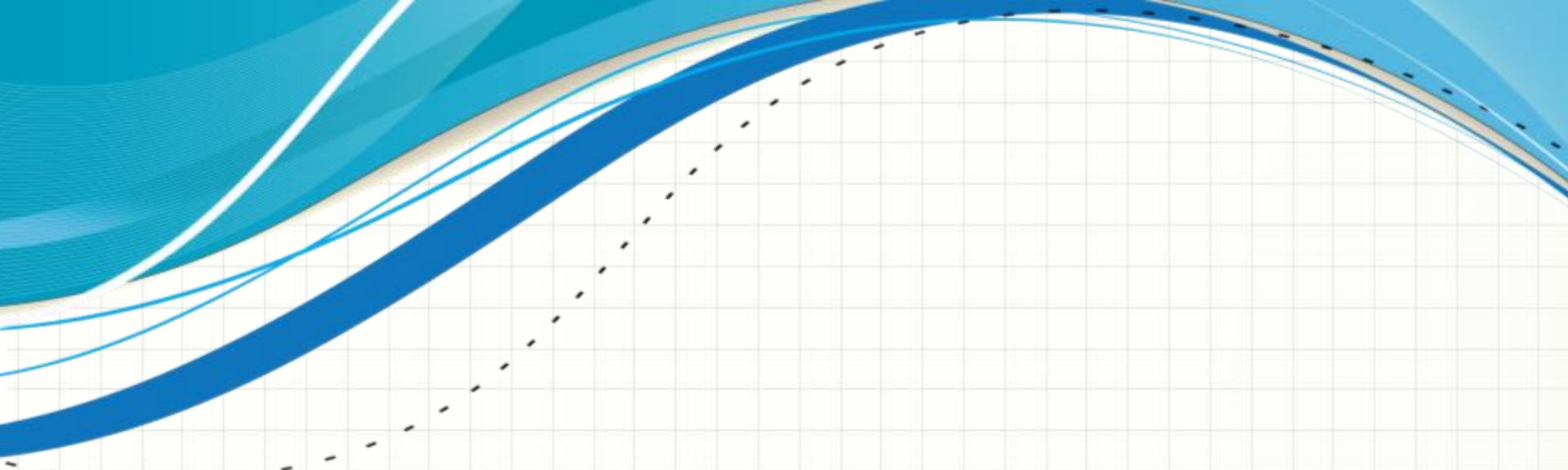
Types of Bilinguals

Simultaneous bilinguals

- Are exposed to two languages at very early age (from birth - 3 years)

- Have two native languages

- Develop two separate, but connected linguistic systems

Types of Bilinguals

Sequential bilinguals

- Learn one language first, then are introduced to a second language (after age 3)
- Often have a home language that differs from the language of instruction at school

TOPIC 2: PATHWAYS TO BILINGUALISM

Pathways to Becoming Bilingual

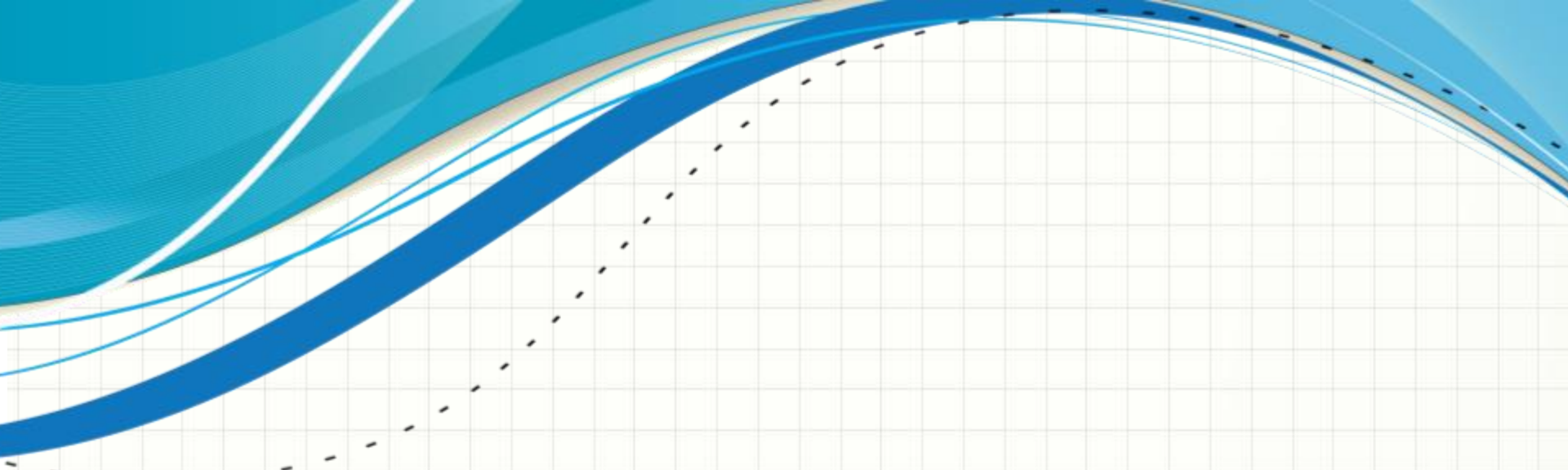Caregivers use a variety of language strategies to support their children's bilingualism:

- one person-one language

- language A at home, language B outside home

- both parents speak both languages

Factors Influencing Bilingual Development Process

- Quantity of input in L_a, L_b

- Quality of input in L_a, L_b

- Opportunity to use language/s in different contexts

- Nature of language use in different contexts

Factors Influencing Bilingual Development Process

- *Quantity of use and exposure* to each language

- *Quality of language context and input* in each language

- *Opportunity to use language/s across a variety of contexts*

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Topic 3: Stages of Bilingual Development

- Simultaneous Bilinguals
- Sequential Bilinguals
- Components of Language

POLL QUESTION 2

BILINGUALISM CAUSES DELAYS IN EARLY LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES.

TRUE OR FALSE?

Stages of Dual Language Learning: Simultaneous Bilinguals

- Simultaneous bilingual children and monolingual children develop language in similar ways
  - Reach same milestones, at around the same ages

- Growth in each language depends on exposure and experience

Stages of Dual Language Learning: Simultaneous Bilinguals

- First words emerge at around 12 months
  - Vocabulary includes words from each language
  - Use similar strategies to communicate
    - over-extending the meaning of words (e.g., dog = any four legged animal),
    - under-extending word meanings (e.g., dog = the family's dog)
- Two-word stage emerges at around 18 months
- At 3-4 years, begin to produce longer and more complex sentences

Stages of Dual Language Learning: Sequential Bilinguals

STAGE 1: Home language (L1) use

- Children draw on what they know

- Attempt to use their home language to communicate

Stages of Dual Language Learning: **Sequential Bilinguals**

STAGE 2: Observation and listening period

- Children appear to be in a "non-verbal" period

- During this time, they collect data about the new language

  – They are listening, watching, and rehearsing quietly what they are learning

Stages of Dual Language Learning: Sequential Bilinguals

STAGE 3: Limited use of new language

- Use telegraphic communication
  - Single words, very short phrases
- Use formulaic phrases
  - Learn entire chunks of language/phrases
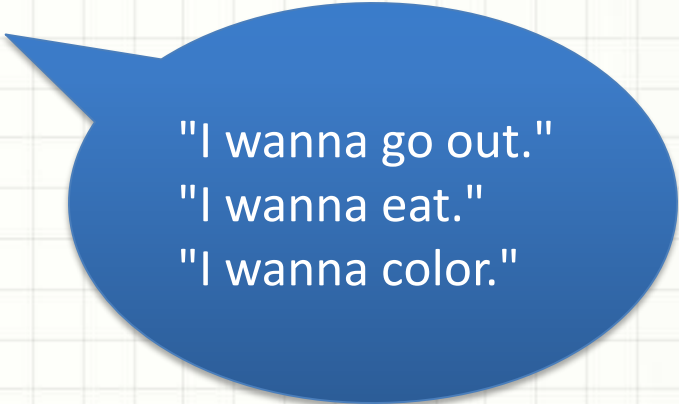 - Don't necessarily know what each component of phrase means

No go!
Manny color.

I wanna play.

Stages of Dual Language Learning: Sequential Bilinguals

STAGE 4: Selected use of new language

– Break up formulaic phrases into meaningful smaller pieces

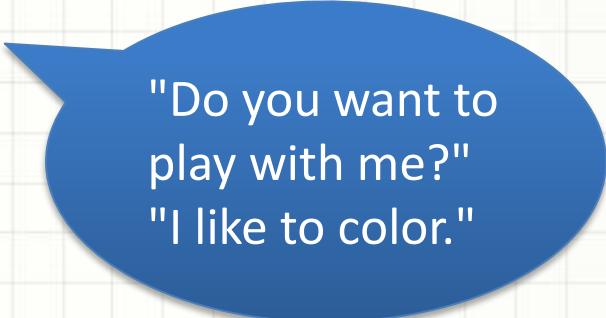– Begin to build their own phrases, sentences with those pieces

"I wanna go out."
"I wanna eat."
"I wanna color."

Stages of Dual Language Learning:
Sequential Bilinguals

STAGE 5: Fluid use of second language (L2)

- With experience, exposure, support, and opportunity to use their new language, proficiency in new language grows

"Do you want to play with me?"
"I like to color."

BUT, there are individual differences in language learning and development!

Components of Language

The sound system
(PHONOLOGY)

Phonology = patterns of sounds in a language
- Bilinguals develop two sound systems
- Some sounds are similar across languages; other sounds are unique to particular languages

Components of Language

The structure of sentences/phrases

(SYNTAX)

Syntax = how words are organized in phrases, sentences

- Different languages follow different patterns for organizing words in sentences
  – e.g., subject – verb – object
        He   went (to) the store."

Components of Language

The structure of words
(MORPHOLOGY)

Morphology = how words are formed

- Different languages have different patterns for forming and changing words

- "dog" + "s" = "dogs"

(single)   (multiple)

Components of Language

Meaning and vocabulary

(SEMANTICS)

Semantics = word meaning

Vocabulary = the basis for communication

- Both are key to understanding and producing language

Components of Language

Language use in social contexts

(PRAGMATICS)

Pragmatics = cultural norms for using language in context

- Understanding what you can say, to whom
- e.g., "Mommy, look at that really old man!"

Components of Language

DISCOURSE: connected chunks of language

- Putting all pieces of language together to communicate ideas, tell stories, explain, argue, etc.

- Patterns of discourse vary by language

- Bilinguals learn discourse patterns for each language through exposure and experience

Topic 4: Typical and Atypical Bilingual Development

POLL QUESTION 3

MOST LANGUAGE "ERRORS" THAT YOUNG BILINGUALS MAKE ARE A NATURAL PART OF THE LANGUAGE LEARNING PROCESS.

TRUE OR FALSE?

Language Learning "Errors"

- Are a natural part of the language learning process

- Show children's meaning making and evolving understanding of language patterns

- Represent strategies that learners use to create language
  - Provide evidence of progress in language competence

Developmental Patterns in Dual Language Learning

- Some [dual] language learning "errors" are similar to those produced by monolinguals
  - Phonology examples: consonant clusters (play, truck)
  - Morphology examples: walked/runned; cats/foots
- Overgeneralization and inconsistent use of language patterns are typical of both monolingual and bilingual children

POLL QUESTION 4

WHEN A CHILD IS LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE, HER NATIVE LANGUAGE MAY INFLUENCE HOW SHE PRONOUNCES AND ORGANIZES THE NEW LANGUAGE.

TRUE OR FALSE?

Transfer: Influence of Other Language

– Children's linguistic knowledge is an important scaffold for additional language learning

- Variations in linguistic patterns across languages leads to nonstandard language, or transfer "errors"
  - phonological influence $\rightarrow$ "accent"
  - syntactic influence$\rightarrow$ word order
    - "the hat blue" vs. "the blue hat"
- Evidence that bilingual children are using what they know and figuring out what works similarly and differently in each language

POLL QUESTION 5

LANGUAGE MIXING IN YOUNG BILINGUALS IS A SIGN THAT THEY CANNOT TELL APART THEIR TWO LANGUAGES AND ARE PROBABLY CONFUSED.

TRUE OR FALSE?

Codemixing

- The use of words or elements of words from two or more languages in conversation (or written language)

  … But, does this mean the child is confused???

Codemixing

– A normal, natural aspect of bilingual acquisition (most bilinguals do it!)

"I put the fork *en la mesa*."

"Quiero ir *outside*."

– A pragmatic, creative way to communicate as language systems still developing

– <u>NOT a sign of confusion</u>, or inability to separate languages

Language Disorder

The inability to understand and process language either expressively or receptively

Commonly Misinterpreted Behaviors of Young Bilinguals

- Child speaks infrequently
- Declines to answer questions
- "Confuses" similar sounding words ("cash" vs. "catch")
- Is unable to tell or retell stories in target language
- Has limited recall
- Uses non-standard pronunciation (says "estop" for "stop")
- Uses non-standard syntax and grammar ("the car red")
- Does not volunteer information

Principles Commonly Used to Diagnose Language Disorders

- Is there delayed speech sound development *in both languages*?
  - Do "error" patterns persist past point in development that is considered typical?
- Does frequency of "error" patterns affect one's ability to understand child's speech *in both languages*?
- Are there uncommon "error" patterns *in both languages*?

Summary of Typical Early Bilingual Development

- Bilingualism does not cause language delays.
- Bilingual children's early vocabularies in each language tend to be smaller than those of monolinguals, but are comparable when combined.
- Bilingual children follow a similar time line in development of morphology and syntax as monolingual children, but bilinguals might need more time to reach accuracy of use.
- Bilingual children are not equally fluent in each language. Their language proficiencies change over time.
  - Proficiency is related to exposure and opportunity to use language/s.
  - Children use both developing languages as resources that support further development.
  - Codemixing is a typical bilingual behavior that supports communication and meaning-making.

Q&A

CONTACT INFORMATION:

MILEIDIS GORT, ED.D.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF BILINGUALISM AND BILITERACY

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

GORT.4@OSU.EDU