



## Session Objectives

- I understand
- the challenges that students will face on the pathway to bilingualism and how parents can support them;
  - some common myths about students learning in two languages and how to respond to them.

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## Challenge #1



Scenario 1

## The Power of English

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(Carter, 2018)

English is the superpower of languages, not only in this country, but around the world. Our Spanish home language students are surrounded by English and since it is the language of peer culture, movies, TV, the Internet, video games, etc., they are motivated to learn and use the language outside of school. Many come to prefer English over their own language. Social pressure to speak English is so great that immigrant parents may notice resistance to using the home language as early as kindergarten. A generation later, however, even if grandparents continue to use the home language, their grandchildren will often respond to them in English. Linguists call this the “three generation pattern.”

English home language students also are challenged by the power of English. Because of the limited amount of exposure they have to a second language, it is much harder for them to achieve proficiency in that language, so they tend to revert back to English whenever they can.





### Scenario #1

Scenario 2

A parent is visiting her child's grade 5 DLI classroom during Spanish instructional time and is surprised to hear some students using English in small group work. What might be the explanation?

- a. An English-speaking student asked everyone to please speak English.
- b. Research shows that all DLI students prefer English by grade 4 or 5, so they sometimes fall into English when working in groups.
- c. In a dual immersion classroom, students can choose to speak either language and this group chose English.

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### Scenario #2

A Latina parent can't understand why her son only wants to speak English at home, but she thinks he will be able to use Spanish with his grandparents when they come to visit next year from California. What does the research say about this?

- a. Once the child's grandparents speak to him in Spanish, he will automatically respond in that language.
- b. Her son is in a dual language program so will be able to speak both languages equally well.
- c. By not speaking Spanish at home, her son risks not being able to communicate with his grandparents.

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(Carter, 2018)



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### HEARSAYER:

I hear English-speaking students in a DLI program have high levels of proficiency in Spanish by the end of elementary school.

Fact Check

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## Challenge #2

Scenario 3

### STATEWIDE TESTING



Reading, Mathematics, Science

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Testing is used in schools to measure student achievement. The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) are the state tests

that help districts measure student progress toward Minnesota's academic standards. Students take tests in reading and math, beginning in grade 3, and science in grade 5. These tests are a challenge for DLI students who may have received initial literacy instruction in Spanish during the primary grades. Because of the lag in their English reading skills, they may score poorly not only in English reading but in math and science as well. This affects both groups of students. English home language speakers will likely score lower than their third grade peers, though they usually catch up within a year after formal instruction in English language arts begins. Spanish speakers, however, take much longer to develop strong enough English literacy skills to do well on standardized tests. Another consequence of statewide testing is that schools feel pressured to start English earlier than they need to in order to show high test scores on the MCA.



#### Scenario #3

Scenario 4

Third grade DLI students are getting ready to take the state's English reading test for the first time. Parents may be worried about their child's performance. Which of these statements might reassure them?

- Children will do fine on the state tests, even if they have not had much English instruction.
- Students may not perform at grade level in reading by grade 3, and this lag is to be expected.
- The lag is temporary. In general, by middle school students do as well or better on standardized tests than their non-DLI peers.

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(Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2014)



#### Scenario #4

Parents wonder how their middle-schooler will do on the state math test since the test is given in English. What can we say, **in general**, about middle school test results?

- DLI students always do better than their peers in English-only classrooms on standardized math tests given in English.
- DLI students do as well as or better than their peers in English-only classrooms on standardized math tests given in English.
- DLI students show a lag in math skills throughout middle and high school.

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(Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2014)

Slide 14: Fact or Myth?



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## HEARSAYER:

I hear that the best way to know how my DLI child is doing in school is by her scores on the state-required standardized tests.

Fact  
Check

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If you are concerned about your child's performance, the best way to check on it is to talk with the classroom teacher. It is also important to keep in mind that school learning is not just about academics. Schools are also places where children learn important social skills, cultural understandings, and how to be a good citizen, none of which are assessed on standardized tests.

**MISSING WORDS!**



**¡PALABRAS PERDIDAS!**

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**TAKE A BREAK!**

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Slides 16-22: Missing Words!



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## Challenge #3



### Learning difficulties and disabilities

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### What research tells us

Scenario 5

- Children can acquire competence in two languages at the same time, within the limits of their learning ability, as long as there are adequate supports in place.
- Bilingual children are not at greater risk for learning disabilities than children who learn only one language.
- Parents are advised to make a long term commitment to DLI and to avoid switching students out of DLI unless there is strong evidence that an individual child will perform better in an all-English program.

(Genesee, 2009)

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When students struggle, parents often jump to the conclusion that it is because their child cannot cope with learning two languages at the same time. It is true that for some children, the DLI setting can be more challenging than for others. But you have learned that it takes time to develop language and literacy and that a lag in these skills in the early years of elementary is to be expected. If you or your child's teacher suspects it is more than that, it is important to discuss your concerns. Other learning specialists at the school may also be part of the discussion.



### Scenario #5

Scenario 6

A parent wonders if his daughter, who has learning difficulties in her first language, should transfer to a monolingual school. Which of these statements are true?

- Children who have learning difficulties in a bilingual setting will have the same challenges in a monolingual environment.
- Bilingual students are at greater risk of having learning difficulties than those children learning in only one language.
- With proper support, all children, including those with language and learning difficulties, can acquire a second language.

(Lowry, 2012)

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### Scenario #6

A parent is worried about her son, who has been diagnosed with a learning disability. Which of these questions should she ask ?

- a) What kinds of speech-language and special education services are available at your school?
- b) How will you support my child's development in both languages?
- c) How can I support my child's development at home?

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**HEARSAYER:**

I hear children will be confused learning two languages at once.

**Fact Check**

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Slide 28: Fact or Myth?

**HEARSAYER:**

I hear if a child in a DLI program has a learning disability, she would be better off switching to an English-only program.

**Fact Check**

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### Challenge #4

Scenario 7

**Bilingual kids**



**- Monolingual parents**

Parents often worry that they will not be able to help their child if they are not bilingual or biliterate themselves. But there are many ways that you can support your child, even if you do not speak both languages of the DLI program.





### Scenario #7

Scenario 8

A parent is afraid she won't be able to help her son with his homework if she doesn't speak both languages. What could she do?

- a. Use her native language to talk to her son about what he is learning. Ask him to explain to her any new concepts so that she can be sure he understands them.
- b. For homework in the second language, encourage her child to focus on what he CAN do first. See what's left and have her son ask the teacher about it the next day.
- c. Find a "study buddy" who could help him.

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### Scenario #8

A parent wants to help her daughter develop her reading skills in English and Spanish, even if she doesn't know both languages herself. What could she do?

- a. Read with her child in her home language, listen to her child read in the second language.
- b. Do her best to read with her in the second language, even if she is not a fluent reader in that language – it's better than nothing.
- c. She shouldn't worry about reading in English at home. She'll get enough of that at school.

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Slide 34: Fact or Myth?

HEARSAYER:

I hear that English-speaking parents should not read to their children in English because it will confuse them.

Fact Check

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(Canadian Parents for French, 2007)

HEARSAYER:

I hear children should always learn how to read first in their home language.

Fact Check

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Slide 37: Continued fact check



## ¿Qué debe hacer un padre?



## What's a parent to do?

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Slides 39 – 42: What's a parent to do?

### References

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## Slide 43: Feedback

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## Answers to Discussion Questions

**Slide 7:** Answer: b.

- a. This is possible, but students often fall back into English without even thinking about it.
- b. Also, Spanish speakers find it frustrating to speak in their language when other students can't communicate that well in return.
- c. It's up to the teacher, not the students, to set the language of instruction for each lesson.

**Slide 8:** Answer: c

- a. He may understand his grandparents pretty well and may even be able to speak to them, but over time, he will be able to access less and less his home language.
- b. The goal of DLI is to achieve high proficiency levels in both languages, but this takes many years. Even then, one language may still be stronger than the other, and it's often English. Also, a DLI education is not going to magically turn your child into a fully balanced bilingual!
- c. Research shows that immigrants' children tend to become bilinguals who overwhelmingly prefer English. As a result, the same immigrants' grandchildren likely speak English only.

**Slide 10:** Compared to traditional language learners, yes. But because they are surrounded by English, students need extensive added exposure to both social and academic language if they are to become bilingual and biliterate in Spanish. It takes many years – from kindergarten through high school and beyond – to achieve advanced levels of proficiency in a second language. (Genesee, 2007)

**Slide 12:** Answer: - b and c.

a: **Some** children – especially those who have had a literacy-rich home environment- may do well on the tests, but this is not the expectation.

**Slide 13:** Answer: b



**Slide 15:** Standardized tests are just one measure of a child's learning. How the child does in the classroom is equally if not more important than her scores on standardized tests.

**Slide 26:** Answer: Both a and c

**Slide 27:** Answer: all three!

**Slide 29:** Children may mix languages from time to time, or they might use words from both languages in the same sentence. This is a normal stage of bilingual development. Speakers will ultimately learn to separate both languages correctly. (Gorman, 2012)

**Slide 30:** There is no evidence that this is so. Children who have learning disabilities in a bilingual setting will have the same challenges in a monolingual setting. (Gorman, 2012)

**Slide 32:** Answer: All 3!

**Slide 33:** Answer: a

b - When you read aloud you are modeling fluency, expression and pronunciation, so you should read in the language you are most comfortable with.

c) The role of English at home will depend on the program model and will change as students move up in the grades . Your child's teacher will communicate with you about how to support your child's biliteracy development.

**Slide 35:** English-speaking parents should read to their child in English, share their love of books and provide a rich literacy environment in their home. However, they should not attempt to teach their child how to read in English. It's not necessary! They will learn to read in English in school.

**Slide 36:** This is true for **Spanish home language speakers**. Such instruction builds on children's strengths and connects unfamiliar material to the familiar. Literacy skills developed in the home language can then be applied to learning to read and write in a second language (English). (IRA, 2001)

