Living in the Grey

Bimodal Development in Young Deaf/HoH Children:

(Re)framing Our Thoughts

THE LEARNING CENTER
FOR THE DEAF

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Lighting fast objectives…

- ❖ Bimodal myths – the what and the why?
- ❖ Myth purging
- ❖ Provider and caregiver challenges
- ❖ Barriers and privilege checking
- ❖ The how – language planning that meets families where they are

Bilingual

Bimodal

Knowing two (or more) languages that share a modality

Knowing two languages, using two modalities (one visual, one aural-oral)

ASL & printed English (visual)

English & Spanish (spoken)

LSQ & printed French (visual)

Arabic & Hebrew (spoken)

ASL & spoken English

LSQ & spoken French

Chinese & CSL

Myths*

*still going strong

- "Signing delays talking."
- "Deaf kids should only learn one language at a time."(either-or thinking)

- "Learning more than one language causes 'language confusion.'

- "You don't need to sign because your kid's technology is so advanced."

- "If you don't sign fluently in the early years, your kid can't learn sign language."

- "If you sign and talk, your child won't develop a full language."*

What research says...

- Signing DOES NOT delays talking (Tang 2014, Higgins et. al, 2023)
    - *The flip side is true too: Talking does NOT delay signing**

- Deaf kids DON'T have to learn one language at a time. "Either-or" thinking is unnecessary. (Humphries et. al, 2012; Yim, 2012)

- Learning more than one language DOES NOT cause "language confusion." (Williams & Heinlein, 2013)

- You SHOULD sign EVEN THOUGH your kid's technology is so advanced. CI outcomes are highly varied. (Petersen et. al 2010)

- EVEN if you don't sign fluently in the early years, your kid CAN learn sign language. (Lieberman et. al, 2022)

- WITH intention, intervention, and ample access, your child CAN develop two full languages. Yim 2012, Bunta et al., 2016

error, *problems* and *confusion*, has been replaced… for coherence with the new plurilingual perspective and the <u>recognition of the positive role of language interaction</u>. (Menendez, 2010)

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" ...emerging evidence suggests acquisition of two or more languages is possible for this population (Crowe, 2018) but quality and quantity of access to both languages is critical **"**

(Waltzman 2003, Yim 2012)

Early Intervention Protocols: Proposing a Default Bimodal Bilingual Approach for Deaf Children. M. Diane Clark, et.al. (2020)

…Effective implementation of a bimodal bilingual philosophy begins at identification. An environment that allows for deaf children to become bimodal bilinguals is effective in avoiding language delays (Hamilton & Clark 2020; Hassanzadeh 2012) and language deprivation (Hall et al. 2017)

Provider bias is real and confusing

Deaf children with spoken language bilingualism: Professional guidance to parents

Wright, Stojanovik & Serratrice
Deafness & Education Int'l

Volume 25, 2023
Issue 1, p21-39

*Audiologists ~ "11 times more likely than SLTs [SLPs] to report linguistic confusion"

*ToDs ~"11 times more likely than SLTs to report reduced proficiency in English and the home language because of bilingualism"

*"There is a need for specific training and interprofessional learning to ensure parents receive consistent evidence-based advice"

Fostering Home Languages

"The benefits of bimodal bilingualism go beyond having access to both English and ASL –

–it also serves as a vehicle to scaffold and incorporate the home languages of families who do not speak English."
(Delgado, 2020)

Families (and kids) in the middle...

Families report:

*Getting little information from their "home base" EI about SSPs that promotes multiple language use

*Being actively discouraged from using bimodal approaches by their EIs

*Fairweathered "tolerance" between language "camps" (not feeling truly welcome in either language space)

*Fear of Deaf community rejection (for them and their child)

*Feeling their home -base EI is incompetent with regards to deafness

Families (and kids) in the middle…

Families report:

*Fear their children won't fit in the hearing world or the Deaf community

*Getting mixed messages from family, friends, colleagues, social media, entertainment media, etc.

*Mountains of conflicting information from professionals, even those in the same field (hospital SLP vs. EI SLP vs. SSP SLP)

*Feelings of not knowing who to trust

*Constant fear of "messing up" and lots of feelings of inadequacy

How can we build trust and confidence in families?

Research must drive conversations, referrals, etc., especially when it comes to something as confusing/ variable as bimodal development

NOT:
-conjecture
-myths
-bad science
-buzz words
-"inspiration porn"
-our own language/cultural bias

The Bilingual Brain

Like with hearing children learning two spoken languages, the Deaf brain can learn two languages in two modalities from a young age, simultaneously,
and with <u>some notable trends along the way</u>:

*Uneven development - dominance of one vs. the other
*Slower development of one or both languages
*Code mixing (code blending) using two languages in one utterance
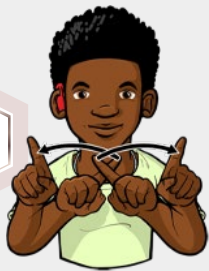
BUT, some exceptions

Children with additional challenges (neurological differences, medical complications, etc.) may not follow typical bilingual-bimodal development patterns.

Depending on the child, it <u>may</u> be more beneficial to learn one language, or not introduce a second language until they have an established primary language.
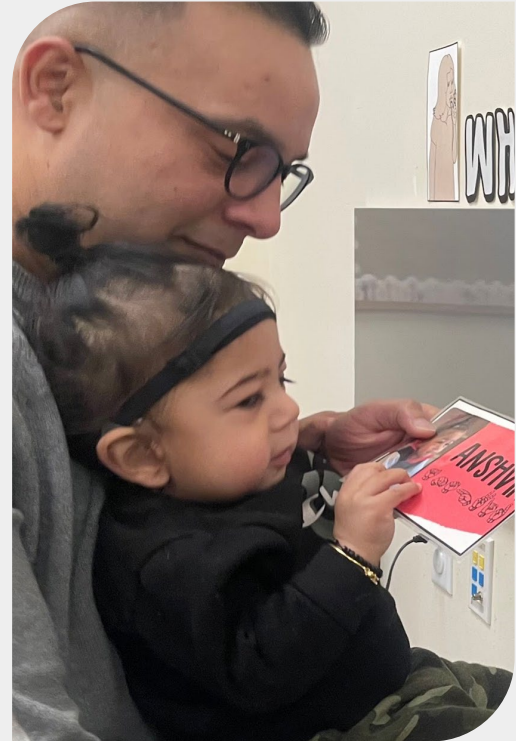
Strategies for their bilingual language development may be different.

Code mixing/code blending ("language mixing")

*It is **NOT SIM-COM** (simultaneous comm.)

*It is **NOT CODE SWITCHING**

*It is **TYPICAL**. Even bilingual-bimodal, fluent, adults do it.

"Rather than being a sign of confusion, code mixing can be seen as a path of least resistance: a sign of bilingual children's ingenuity"
Byers-Heinlein & Casey Lew-Williams 2013

"These findings encourage a move away from a fractional view of bilingualism which focuses on separate proficiencies in separate languages and from pedagogies which aim to separate the use of sign and spoken language.

That is not to suggest that proficiency in both languages does not remain a goal, but rather that we investigate the creative use of children's full language repertoires to achieve such a goal."
Tang, Lam & Yiu K., 2014

Fluency is a spectrum

-bimodal fluency is no different.

Ex: A child may use spoken language in some specific ways, but primarily be an ASL user. Or vice versa.

Language Planning for Bimodalism

We ask a lot of families in our language plans…

In creating these plans, do you consider families' barriers?

"You need xx hours of speech therapy a week"

"Pick times of day to only sign and only talk"

"You have to always separate languages"

"You need to become fluent as quickly as possible"

Do they have the privilege needed to carry out the language plan?

Language Planning for Bimodalism

When designing a language plan, remember:

- Fluency is a spectrum – many parents are starting at zero

- It is not always realistic to separate languages in real life, especially with mixed company and when a family is in early stages of language learning

- Complete and constant separation of languages is not what we advise hearing bilinguals. Code switching takes time/fluency/skill.

Language Planning for Bimodalism

- New language learning is full of privilege:

- Not all adults are capable of reaching the fluency needed to separate languages consistently. A more flexible model may be necessary.

- Learning to fill gaps in sign knowledge takes support and practice, but professionals rarely talk about this. Then parents feel inadequate.

This is where we (the professionals) come in!

★ Providing information or options is only part of our job

★ Recognizing and navigating families' barriers is just as important

*Help families with follow through

*Connect families to SSPs immediately

*Transportation assistance?

*Funding assistance for ASL classes/programs?

*Designing language plans that meet families where they are

Language Planning for Bimodalism

How can we help families enrich and increase "voice-off" times
when they are still learning
and don't yet have the skills to create rich ASL experiences?

Language Planning for Bimodalism

- Emphasize that body language, eye contact/gaze, facial expressions **ARE "LANGUAGE-ING"!**

- Don't forget visual attn./joint attn. strategies!

- Avoid emphasis on "sets" – colors, numbers, letters

- Remember it is not damaging to code blend

  - *Add visuals to make connections (body language, facial expression, real objects, sensory experiences, pointing)*

- Trying to use language *naturally* is a viable goal

Promote real-life Deaf interactions: Deaf mentorship, Deaf-led SSPs, Deaf family partners, online ASL groups, ASL meet-ups, etc.

Language Planning for Bimodalism

Deaf professionals on the team

…Just as important for bimodal kids!

"Presenting a unified front as a diversified bimodal bilingual EHDI team will both validate and support parents in providing crucial language opportunities to their deaf infants." (Clark 2020)

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Language Planning for Bimodalism

THE **ASL** SHOP

Self-Paced Course

Zoom Sessions

In-Person Classes

Assessment

MyASLTeacherROCKs

SigningROCKs   LittleSignersROCK
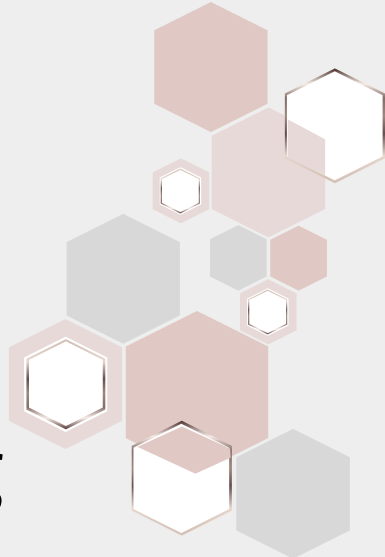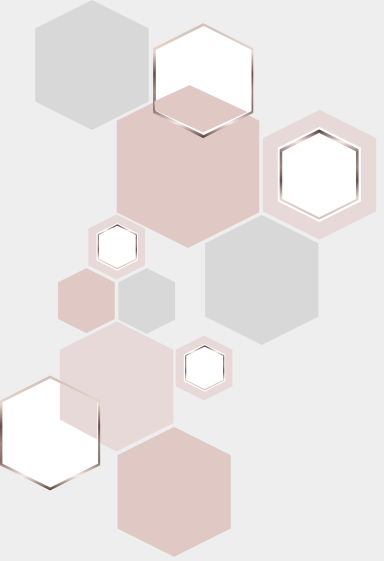
ParentsROCK   Groups

Bimodal reflections:

- Born profoundly Deaf
- ASL from birth
- School for the Deaf
- HAs then CIs (age 4, 6)
- Mainstreamed 9th grade
- Current college junior (using interpreters when she wants)

Takeaways

★ Quantity AND quality of each language are key when bimodalism is the goal

★ Bimodal development follows patterns similar to spoken bilingualism
   ○ "Language confusion" is antiquated. **Languages can, and do, positively interact.**

★ Families get a lot of mixed messages – Let research be your guide, not conjecture, fear, status quo, what's easiest for you, etc.

★ Provide tools to help elevate families above barriers without judgement. Meet them where they are.

★ Check your own bimodal biases

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