

Are Early Intervention Services Placing Home Languages and Cultures "At Risk"?

Victoria I. Puig
Montclair State University

Abstract

This position statement considers family languages, family cultures, and partnerships between family members and early intervention (EI) professionals as intimately interconnected and resources to be accessed when serving young children with special needs and their families. It presents theory and an overview of works that examine the impact of early exposure to a second language, issues of home language maintenance, disability within a cultural context, and cultural models for serving young children and their families. It explores the ways that EI programs intended to nurture the optimal development of infants and toddlers and their families may be placing home languages and cultures "at risk."

Language and Culture in Early Intervention

¡Sí! Tiene que aprender los dos idiomas. Porque los padres son Hispano y la familia Hispana. Entonces no se debe perder su origen de sus padres. (Yes! She has to learn the two languages! Because her parents are Hispanics and her family Hispanic. So you shouldn't lose your parents' origin.) (Early Intervention Provider, 2007).

Well I think in terms of, you know, services and communication development, that both in a way should be considered, but now maybe just the Spanish a little bit more. I mean to kind of establish a foundation of the language that she has more proficiency in. (Early Intervention Service Coordinator, 2007).

Si ella le gusta yo no tengo inconveniente con eso que ella aprenda inglés y español. A mi me gusta que fuera los dos. Porque cuando una persona habla más que un idioma tiene más posibilidades (If she wants I don't have any objection if she learns English and Spanish. I would like it to be the two. Because when someone speaks more than one language she has more possibilities.) (Foster father of a child receiving early intervention services, 2007).

Within the field of early childhood special education, professionals, parents, and researchers, as well as guidelines and mandates, speak in unison for practices that support, honor, and build upon families' cultural and linguistic resources. The voices heard above belong to a foster father of a child receiving early intervention (EI) services and two EI professionals, who shared their thoughts as part of a study that examined the ways that home languages and cultures are integrated into EI services and how families and EI professionals form partnerships (Puig, 2008). Supporting home language maintenance, second language acquisition, and culturally responsive practices is vital but particularly complex when working with young children with special needs and their families.

In 1986, Congress established a federal grant program to support statewide EI services for infants and toddlers (birth to 3 years old) with developmental delays or disabilities and their families. All states and eligible territories now participate in what is referred to as Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This program was initiated in recognition of an "urgent and substantial need to enhance the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities...and the capacity of families to meet their child's needs" (National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, 2009). States also have the option of providing services to "at-risk" infants and toddlers, defined under Part C as individuals "under 3 years of age who would be at risk of experiencing a substantial developmental delay if early intervention services were not provided to the individual" (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004, §632(1)).

One way that federal regulations support these family-centered services is by requiring that "tests and other evaluation materials and procedures are administered in the dominant language or other mode of communication of the child, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so" (Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004, p. 194). Linguistic resources within families are identified and assessed. However, many states' EI programs begin to fall short in the second part of the process—applying these capacities and building up from them. Even though EI programs may recognize the need to assess children using their home languages, they are often not prepared or required to deliver services in those languages. In other words, no requirements exist to support EI that builds upon families' cultural and linguistic resources through direct work with children and families in their home languages.

The optimal development of infants and toddlers and their families' capacity to meet their children's needs are compromised when EI programs—intended to meet the needs of our youngest and perhaps most vulnerable learners and their families—do not integrate home languages and home cultures. Home languages and cultures themselves can be placed "at risk" with significant repercussions.

Family Languages at Risk

To fully appreciate family languages as a resource in EI, it is necessary to first consider them within the contexts of language development, the process of second language acquisition, and the contributions of language to learning and relationship building for very young children, while also considering the impact of special needs. Each of these contexts and the ways they overlap are discussed below.

Very Young Children as Language Learners

Long before we hear their much anticipated first words, children are invested in the task of developing language. Even while still nestled in the womb, they are beginning to develop auditory discrimination and memory capacities. Research involving fetal heart rates suggests that fetuses in the 35th week of gestation can distinguish between novel poems and poems read to them daily over 6 weeks (DeCasper & Spence, 1986). Other studies suggest that newborns show a preference for listening to human speech over music and rhythmic sounds (Butterfield & Siperstein, 1974, as cited in Dyson & Genishi, 1993) and that they recognize the sound patterns and cadence of the mother's voice over other voices (Bardige & Bardige, 2008; DeCasper & Fifer, 1980). Babies are born with a reflex to cry; familiar caregivers can distinguish between a baby's different sounding cries to understand their needs. When listening to infants includes observing how they look into a parent's face and the ways that they cry or move their bodies, it becomes evident that they have begun to develop language skills essential to getting their needs met and building relationships.

During their first 3 years of life, most children lay the necessary foundation and specialized circuits that help them continue to learn the sounds, oral movements, rules, and structures associated with language (Bardige & Bardige, 2008). With the support of adults around them, they ready themselves not only to continue learning language but to use it for learning and socialization. This remarkable process is nurtured by and within the home culture: "beginning at birth, children use their home language and culturally accepted communication styles to connect with others in a meaningful way, forming secure relationships that are intrinsic to healthy development" (Parlakian & Sánchez, 2006).

Bardige and Bardige (2008) note, "Babies come into the world primed to communicate with adults, who are primed to communicate with them" (p. 4). Interactions and relationships with others form contexts for children's language development; their brain cells and their innate capacity to develop language are stimulated by the people around them. It might be said that Chomsky's (1965) "language acquisition device" and the kinds of interpersonal activities that are seen as valuable from Vygotsky's (1978) interactionist perspective come together to reciprocally spark language development.

Early Exposure to a Second Language: Truths and Consequences

The extraordinary task of developing language is one of the main endeavors of children's first 3 years of life. During this brief period, most children begin to "use words with specificity and zest" (Bardige & Bardige, 2008, p. 4). Whether or not these early years are a good time for children to learn two languages at once is a question growing in importance as today's teachers serve increasing numbers of children and families of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Hardin, Mereoiu, Hung, & Roach-Scott, 2009; Wang & Aldridge, 2007). According to the 2000 census, an estimated 14.4 million U.S. school-age children—more than one in four—live in households where a language other than English is spoken. This population has been increasing by approximately 40% each decade (Crawford, 2002).

These population changes are reflected in early childhood education programs. Of children served in Head Start programs throughout the nation in 2000-2001, 26% were considered dominant in a language other than English, with 83% of these speaking Spanish at home (Administration for Children and Families, 2001; Joseph & Cohen, 2000). Latinos now represent the largest minority group in the United States and are increasing in numbers at a rate faster than the population as a whole particularly among the nation's child population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Over 40% of Latinos who reside in the United States are immigrants. These trends are also reflected in the populations served by EI systems. Between July 1, 2004, and June 30, 2005, for example, 24,210 children were evaluated for EI services in New York City. Of those children, 10,646 or 44% were assessed with a bilingual component (B. N. Schiller, personal communication, December 2, 2005).

These statistics compel us to examine beliefs about early exposure to a second language, including its perceived challenges and benefits. The choice and timing of second language introduction and instruction are complicated issues (Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001). The literature on second language acquisition identifies certain myths and misconceptions about young children and language learning (McLaughlin, 1995; Rodriguez, 1998; Sánchez & Thorp, 1998; Smrekar, 2002; Soto, 1991). Some researchers (Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin; Kagan & Garcia, 1991) suggest that these mistaken beliefs affect early childhood programs' decisions to choose English as the language of instruction.

The First Myth. The most common myth is that "children learn second languages quickly and easily" (McLaughlin, 1995, p. 1), "like sponges" (Sánchez & Thorp, 1998, p. 17). Actually, some research indicates that, overall, adults and adolescents are faster, more competent second language learners than young children (Hakuta, 1986; Hamayan & Damico, 1991; Snow & Hoefnagel-Hoehl, 1978). Expectations for young children's language acquisition may be lower; however, they may appear to have communicative competence in a second language because they have mastered shorter, simpler structures utilizing much more restricted vocabularies. Because the discourse skills that would accurately show their proficiency are not assessed (McLaughlin, 1995; Smrekar, 2002), children can appear to have greater second language competence although they may have very limited language or the rote language sometimes called "Barney English" (which they can pick up watching television programs such as *Barney*) (Marcus & Ames 1998).

Children bring to the task of second language acquisition two potential advantages over adults, however. First, very young children possess a unique sensitivity to the phonemes of language. This heightened phonemic awareness, evident in infants, allows very young children to better reproduce the sounds of languages and therefore have more native-like accents than older language learners (Bardige & Bardige, 2008; Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004; Gildersleeve-Neumann, Kester, Davis, & Pena, 2008; Hamers & Blanc, 1989; Tabors, 1997). This ability to distinguish virtually all the combinations of sounds of languages begins to diminish at approximately 10 months of age when children's perceptual sensitivities seem to focus on the language or languages to which they have been consistently exposed. Young children's other advantage in learning an additional language lies in their tendency to demonstrate lower affective filters than their adult counterparts, being more willing to take risks and experiment with language, which in turn may support their second language acquisition.

The Second Myth. A related mistaken assumption about young children's second language learning is that once they are heard speaking the second language, their skills are sufficient to enable them to

learn academic content in that language. Skills that are used for face-to-face communication in a second language do not necessarily equip children to negotiate novel, cognitively demanding information in that language (Cummins, 1979). This misconception may account for children receiving inappropriate educational services. Children with limited skills in English as their second language are sometimes erroneously placed in classrooms where English is the language of instruction. Also, professionals who do not fully understand the concept of levels of second language proficiency may mistakenly assess second language learners as having language or cognitive delays, contributing to over-representation of non-English speakers in special educational placements.

The Third Myth. Educational decisions that ignore home language skills and that do not recognize and establish bilingualism as an asset may result from the underlying misconception that bilingualism is a problem, so that the earlier children learn English, the greater their prospects for later academic success (Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001; Rodriguez, 1998; Sanchez & Thorp, 1998; Yoshida, 2008). Cummins' work (1976, 1979, 1981) supports the use of the home language to educate young children from immigrant minority groups. His interdependence theory suggests that second language proficiency is dependent on competence in the first language, at least during the early stages of second language acquisition. His threshold hypothesis emphasizes the importance of a strong home language foundation, suggesting that bilingual children must achieve a minimum "threshold" level of competence in their first language in order to circumvent cognitive disadvantages and set the stage for potential intellectual benefits of bilingualism. The misconception that young children will do best if they learn English even at the expense of the home language does not take into account research that indicates positive effects of bilingualism on cognitive and neural development (Yoshida, 2008) or the role of the home language in laying the groundwork for uninterrupted cognitive development and second language acquisition (Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001; Collier, 1995; Genesee, 2008; Peal & Lambert, 1962; Sánchez & Thorp, 1998).

The most critical factor when considering whether or not the early years are a good time for children to learn two languages at once is the risk to the home language. If the child's home language is the societal language, there is little risk and a greater likelihood that the process will be additive—the child will learn the second language and the home language will be preserved. However, if the child's home language is not the societal language, there is the risk of a subtractive result in which the "native language and culture are overwhelmed by the presence of a majority language spoken outside of the home" (Fort & Stechuk, 2008, p. 25). This loss may manifest as a lack of first language development, arrested first language development, or a progressive loss of previously acquired first language skills (Verhoeven & Beschoten, 1986, as cited in Kouritzin, 1999).

Another mistaken assumption is that culturally and linguistically diverse young children first encounter a second language upon entering classroom settings. Several researchers (Tabors, Pérez, & López, 2003; Wong Fillmore, 1991, 1992) have examined the processes of second language acquisition and home language maintenance of children in preschool settings, but little research has been done on the effects of early second language exposure for very young children who are not yet in school settings (Méndez-Pérez, 2000). Thus, the research does not represent the experiences of very young children who receive home-based EI services or whose older siblings carry English from their classrooms into the home.

Studying Home Language Maintenance

Tabors and colleagues (2003) compared the language and early literacy skills of a preschool sample of bilingual children with a group of monolingual children who were beginning to make the transition from home to school. Children in the Early Childhood Study (ECS) sample were bilingual children born in the United States to parents who came from 22 countries and Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rican Comparative (PRC) sample consisted of monolingual Spanish-speaking children. Information about the children's dual language and literacy abilities was revealed through a language and literacy battery of tests consisting of parallel instruments in Spanish and English.

On average, the ECS sample demonstrated oral language skills below the norm in both English and Spanish. Since these children were English language learners, it was not surprising that their scores were low compared to monolingual English-speaking children. However, their low scores in Spanish

may indicate the vulnerability of the home language when young children acquire the societal language as their second language. The PRC sample's higher oral language skills scores may indicate an advantage for children learning one language in the context of a shared language community.

Maintenance or replacement of the home language is often affected by sociolinguistic factors, including the physical and social contexts of language use and the perceived attitudes and values attributed to languages (Hamers & Blanc, 1989). An illustration of this emerged from my own work with Spanish-speaking children and families receiving EI services. Manolito, a 2-year-old child, lived with his aunt, his 16-year-old sister, and his maternal grandmother (*abuela*), who was his primary caregiver. Both his aunt and sister were very competent in both Spanish and English, but *abuela* was a monolingual speaker of Spanish. When I began working with Manolito, the language of the home was Spanish. While Manolito demonstrated a language delay, his communication skills were in Spanish. After I had worked with Manolito for approximately 3 months, the family's home became a foster care placement for his cousin, Leon. Leon was 5 years old, in kindergarten, and a speaker of English. From Manolito's perspective, all of these things made Leon very "cool." Manolito soon became very motivated to speak English, so motivated in fact that he refused to speak Spanish. Initially this refusal occurred only in Leon's presence. Soon, however, even though he was more competent in Spanish, Manolito began to speak only English to Leon, to his sister and aunt, to me, and, most tragically, to his non-English-speaking *abuela*. Over the next 6 months, Manolito's English improved, but even his receptive skills in Spanish seemed to decline.

Wong Fillmore's (1991) work, "When Learning a Second Language Means Losing the First," examined findings from a national survey of language minority families to compare the language skills of bilingual children placed in monolingual and bilingual early learning environments. Families were surveyed to ascertain to what degree their primary language patterns were influenced by the child's early learning of English in preschool programs. Wong Fillmore discovered that many children in English-only programs began to give up their native language before mastering their second. The results seem to confirm Wong Fillmore's hypothesis, and the findings of Tabors and colleagues, that early exposure to English can negatively affect both children's ability to speak the home language and families' language patterns.

For families where parents and caregivers do not speak English, the effects of home language loss are particularly distressing. In these families, as children learn English and gradually begin to choose it over their home language, communication between children and parents slowly erodes. The National Association for the Education of Young Children's position statement on responding to linguistic and cultural diversity states:

The loss of children's home language may result in the disruption of family communication patterns, which may lead to the loss of intergenerational wisdom; damage to individual and community esteem; and children's potential nonmastery of their home language or English (NAEYC, 1995, p. 2).

Returning to the example of Manolito and his family, we see this disruption of family communication patterns begin to unfold. During the 9 months that I worked with Manolito and his family after Leon moved in, English became the dominant language in the home. This shift in language patterns seemed to cause a shift in family roles as well. *Abuela* was excluded from many of the conversations and much of the daily action of the home. Her daughter and granddaughter took on more dominant roles in discipline and decision making for the two boys. When *Abuela* lost her voice in this way, she could no longer help Manolito develop language skills or support his learning about the culture that nurtured him, about the world around him, and about the values and beliefs that were sacred to her. In choosing English at such an early age, Manolito may have lost a great deal.

Richard Rodriguez is a writer, teacher, international journalist, and educational consultant born into a Mexican immigrant family. Much of his work reflects on his experiences separating from his cultural past to become a fully assimilated American. Rodriguez (1983) shared his perspective of how things changed in his home when teachers convinced his parents that they should speak English at home instead of Spanish:

[There] was a new quiet at home. The family's quiet was partly due to the fact that, as we children learned more and more English, we shared fewer and fewer words with our parents.... Dinners would be noisy with the clinking of knives and forks against dishes. My mother would smile softly between her remarks; my father at the other end of the table would chew and chew at his food, while he stared over the heads of his children. (p. 139)

Sandra Cisneros (1984), in her novel *The House on Mango Street* describes the pain of a parent, Mamacita, when her very young son, who has just begun to talk, first uses English. Mamacita responds using three of the eight words she knows in this language:

And then to break her heart forever, the baby boy, who has begun to talk, starts to sing the Pepsi commercial he heard on T.V. No speak English, she says to the child who is singing in the language that sounds like tin. No speak English, no speak English, and bubbles into tears. No, no, no, as if she can't believe her ears. (p. 78)

Family Involvement in Guarding Home Languages

Like Wong Fillmore and Tabors and colleagues, Guardado (2002) studied the loss and maintenance of home language. However, this study differed in that it accessed the perspectives of Spanish-speaking parents of children who were growing up either bilingually or monolingually. Two participating families had children fluent in English who demonstrated a considerable deficiency in or reluctance to use Spanish. Two families had children in the same age range who were fluent in both languages. The study used semi-structured interviews to examine what the parents believed about causes of Spanish language loss and factors that facilitated maintaining the home language, and how they felt about their children's loss or maintenance of Spanish.

Emotional ties with the native language and culture were described as a major influence on Spanish language maintenance. Although parents in all four families expressed strong connections to their Hispanic culture and roots, parents of the monolingual English-speaking children were less emphatic about their children's Hispanic identity. All four families referred to the potential future economic and professional advantages of bilingualism, but the two families with bilingual children also discussed the connections among all four—language, identity, moral development, and mental development. The separation between language and culture may have contributed to the children's loss of the home language.

Another obstacle to home language maintenance may be families' own views about language use and development. In trying to insure that their children can belong and succeed in their adopted countries, some immigrant parents unknowingly help perpetuate the myth that what is best for very young children is to learn English even at the expense of their home language (Sánchez & Thorp, 1998). They believe that early acquisition of English will contribute to their children's economic and social survival in the United States (Wong Fillmore, 1991). In one study using focus groups, many Mexican immigrant parents of preschoolers expressed the view that schools should focus on developing academic and social readiness and teaching English, while teaching Spanish and Mexican culture should remain the parents' responsibility (Adair & Tobin, 2008). The fact that their children would soon be transitioning to English-only kindergarten environments from bilingual preschool settings may have contributed to this point of view and to a certain level of urgency. It is indisputable that speaking English is vital to building a life in the United States, but is it necessary that home language and cultures are lost in the process? Adair and Tobin (2008) pose the question in this way, "This tension goes to the heart of the problem facing immigrant parents everywhere: how can they raise their children to be able to succeed and feel at home in their adopted country while retaining their heritage, language, and culture?" (p. 145).

Blum-Martinez (2002) also examined parent involvement in guarding the mother tongue. The Mexican immigrant mothers she interviewed expressed their desire for their children to gain the skills necessary to succeed in the English-speaking world, but not at the expense of their ability to speak Spanish. Their stories illustrated their efforts to ensure that their children maintain their home language and the access it gives them to their families and culture. One mother described her decision to change her schedule to work the night shift so she could re-teach her 3-year-old daughter

the Spanish language skills that she was losing as a result of placement in a monolingual (English) preschool class: "I said no, this is not right. She doesn't understand me. I can't communicate with her and she can't (communicate) with me, because we didn't speak the same" (Blum-Martinez, 2002, p. 134).

A study that I conducted using informal interviews and observations provides a glimpse of the roles that two languages, English and Spanish, played in the lives of two families in the Washington Heights community of New York City with children who received EI services (Puig, 2003). The two mothers (Maria and Rosario) and two of their older children discussed the different uses and importance of speaking English and speaking Spanish in ways that I identified as *access*. The following quotes demonstrate how both mothers in this study paired English with accessing opportunities and Spanish with accessing relationships:

Interviewer: And why do you think it's important to speak both languages in this country?

Maria: Well, because on one side it's better to find a job—it's better paid. And if we decide to visit our country and they only speak English, they'll be in the clouds like I felt when I had just arrived. (Puig, 2003, p. 13)

Rosario also valued both English and Spanish for her children's lives:

Interviewer: Is it also important that they speak Spanish? Or is it more important that they speak English?

Rosario: Right now here—it's better in English.

...

Interviewer: Why do you think it's important for him to continue to speak in Spanish and not lose his Spanish?

Rosario: Because when we go to my country, how is he going to communicate with the other children, with my family? It's important. (Puig, 2003, p. 13)

Both mothers positioned English as a means of accessing opportunities. Maria explained that she was motivated to learn English in order to help her son with his homework, and Rosario saw English as a way to help her children "go forward."

Rosario's son Pablo (9 years old) explained the importance of speaking both languages by describing the different contexts in which he used them. Margarita (8 years old), Maria's daughter, echoed Pablo's words with regard to the different contexts and relationships that require use of each language:

Interviewer: What do you think about speaking English and Spanish? Do you think it's important to speak both or what do you think?

Margarita: Important.

Interviewer: It is? How come—why do you think it's important to speak both?

Margarita: Because when you go to the hospital, the people know English and you don't know any English and then you cannot communicate with them.

...

Interviewer: Any times that you can think about that it was important to speak Spanish?

Margarita: Cause you can talk to Mom, Dad, cousins, friends, and to family.

Both families also described situations when the older siblings were required to translate for their parents. Margarita and her mother separately recounted the occasion when Miguel, Margarita's younger brother, was hospitalized and Margarita translated what the doctors said for her mother. Pablo commented that he helps his parents "traduce" (the only example of code switching during the interviews) letters and interactions in the community.

Ramsey (2004) discusses the risk to family relationships encountered when children are called upon to serve as translators, negotiators, and teachers for their parents. Because the children are in school, they have learned the new language and customs more rapidly than their parents. This phenomenon can result in role reversals in families and an undermining of respect for parental authority. A character in Paul Fleischman's novel *Seedfolks* (1997) explains that "the older you are, the younger you get when you move to the United States" (p. 17). He labeled this "Garcia's Equation" and described how it manifested when he and his father moved here from Guatemala:

He would only buy food at the *bodega* down the block. Outside of there he lowered his eyes and tried to get by on mumbles and smiles. He didn't want strangers to hear his mistakes. So he used me to make phone calls and to talk to the landlady and to buy things in stores where you had to use English. He got younger. I got older. (p. 18)

The voices of different families represented in the research literature (Adair & Tobin, 2008; Puig, 2003; Blum-Martinez, 2002; Guardado, 2002; Wong Fillmore, 1991) come together to tell us that both English and Spanish are important in their lives. English is the language of homework and hospitals. It is the language that helps a person go forward and find a better-paying job. It is the language of access to opportunities. Spanish is the language that lets you talk to "Mom, Dad, cousins, friends, and to family." It will help keep you from being "in the clouds" when visiting your home country. Spanish is the language of access to relationships.

Focusing on Children and Families Served by Early Intervention Systems

Issues of second language acquisition and home language maintenance are particularly complex when focusing on children and families served by EI programs. While researchers cite the vulnerability of home languages in the face of early exposure to the societal language (Tabors et al., 2003; Wong Fillmore, 1991, 1992), as discussed earlier, we also hear the voices of immigrant parents who value opportunities for their children to learn English (Puig, 2003; García, Evangelista, Martínez, Disla, & Paulino, 1988; Guardado, 2002). However, English is the language of mainstream education and society, so children will have ongoing opportunities to acquire it. The home language is more vulnerable, particularly in light of the compounding issues faced by young children receiving EI services.

Additional misconceptions emerge in early childhood education when special needs meet cultural and linguistic diversity. One such misconception is that speaking a language other than English is a special need. This is untrue; speaking a language other than English does not qualify a child for EI or other special education services. It does, however, have the potential to be the foundation for both linguistic and cognitive advantages if approached in an additive way.

Children who speak minority languages and whose backgrounds and experiences differ from those valued in mainstream education often have been considered deficient by many educators (Wong Fillmore, 1992). Often the approach to the perceived "deficiency" has been to teach them the language, skills, and dispositions that are valued in our schools. Good early childhood education, however, builds upon the strengths of children and their families; their languages, cultures, and experiences are resources that should be applied, not discarded. Cummins' (1976, 1979, 1981) interdependence theory tells us that language skills transfer, so, too, do language deficits. The young child's language development will best be nurtured through the language in which he or she has already begun to develop a foundation—the home language.

A related misconception is that if language minority children learn English before entering school, the

need for compensatory language and academic support in the future will be less. EI or preschool special education services for children considered at risk for developmental delay are thus seen as a way to "kill two birds with one stone." This assumption is incorrect and has dangerous implications. The studies previously discussed (Blum-Martinez, 2002; Guardado, 2002; Tabors et al., 2003; Wong Fillmore, 1991, 1992) demonstrated how early exposure to the societal language as a second language resulted in a tendency toward home language loss, in risks to early literacy, and in a breakdown of family communication. The children in these studies were preschool age and older and were not identified as having developmental delays or disabilities. However, for children like Manolito who are under the age of 3 and receive EI services because of some kind of developmental delay or disability, age and disability may increase the risks of early exposure to the societal language as a second language. For such children, the home language is likely to be less developed and thus more vulnerable; receiving EI services that result in earlier than usual exposure to English may thus create a liability rather than an opportunity. Home language skills; cognitive development; parental ability to contribute to language, learning, and social-emotional growth; and even acquisition of English language skills may all be placed at risk during this peak period of a child's development.

Little research exists on how disabilities affect the development of home languages and second languages for infants and toddlers from homes where a language other than the societal language is spoken (Méndez-Pérez, 2000), although some current literature recognizes the increased importance of capitalizing on the home language when working with bilingual children who have special needs (Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001; Hardin et al., 2009).

Ortiz (1984) summarized Macaulay's (1980) comments on the question of choosing the language of instruction for exceptional bilingual children in this way:

It is a common misconception that handicapped children who have limited English proficiency, or who are bilingual, should be taught in English. This judgment is based on fears that these children will have difficulty developing language skills, will be confused by bilingual instruction, or will require more time than others to master a language. Educators feel it is in the best interests of students to provide instruction in *one* language, and the choice is usually English, the language of the larger society. Yet, for many children, such reasoning ignores a critical factor which is the basis for most learning: the learner's ability to understand what is presented.

McCardle and colleagues (1995) identified a high occurrence of language delay among children who were American military dependents living in South Korea. Four hundred and six Korean American children between the ages of 3 months and 5 years were screened using Korean, English, or both as appropriate. Ninety-eight percent of the children screened had Korean mothers and American fathers, and 95.7% were cared for by a native speaker of Korean. Forty-two percent of the children performed in a range suggesting that they were at risk for developmental disability, particularly in the language portions of the screening.

The researchers established a possible explanation for the high rate of language delays in the children's Korean language skills, based on anecdotal reports and study of Korean societal norms. They hypothesized that American fathers had insisted that their children learn English first, and because Korean society remains male dominated in many ways, the children's Korean mothers respected the fathers' preferences and began to use their faltering English with their children. This decision had several potential effects. Korean mothers were not equipped to be strong language models in English, and by restricting their use of Korean, they not only impeded their children's language development in Korean but also inadvertently hampered their own ability to nurture their children and build strong attachments with them using their "language of love." McCardle and colleagues (1995) described this as "an artificial limiting of valuable linguistic input the mother could and would naturally provide to her child under other circumstances" (p. 70).

The findings of this study were limited to a distinctive sample, but the researchers' conclusions about support for the children's development of language skills are not unusual. When EI services are delivered in English to children from homes where another language is spoken, the EI system itself creates an "artificial limiting of valuable linguistic input."

Méndez-Pérez (2000) studied language use in the home and parental beliefs about language development. Spanish was the primary language used in all of the research homes. Through questionnaires, interviews, and observations, Méndez-Pérez examined mothers' perceptions and beliefs about language acquisition, including whether their children's EI services for diagnosed language disabilities should be provided in English or Spanish, how the disability affected development of their children's communication skills, and how they could support their children's language development.

All of these children qualified for EI services based on assessment as having or being at risk for a developmental delay; however, the mothers did not characterize their children as having communication disabilities. All of the mothers expressed that they had an important role in facilitating their children's language development through interactions with them. They all shared that they felt it was important for their children to learn Spanish and be bilingual, and they agreed with the decision that their children receive EI services in Spanish. Cultural heritage and communication with family members were cited as motivations. The mothers also felt that their children should learn English. Surprisingly, they felt that even though they did not speak English, they could help their children with this task, although they did not explain how they hoped to do so. While they agreed with the decision to have EI services in the home language, they lacked information about overall language development as well as second language acquisition.

Home Language Loss and Risk to Family Cultures

Wong Fillmore (1992, p. 6) quotes a preschool teacher whose sentiments have been echoed by many and enacted by numerous educational policies and practices:

Look, these kids need English before they go to school. So what if they lose their first language? In this world, you gotta give something to get something! They lose their mother tongue, but they gain English, and with it, access to what they can learn in school. That's not such a big price. (p. 6)

Many researchers (Puig, 2003; Cummins, 1979, 1989; Páez, Tabors, & López, 2007; Wong Fillmore, 1991, 1992) have set out to determine if, in fact, when it comes to home languages you "gotta give something to get something" and just what is the price paid when the home language is bartered for the societal language. Language is used to transmit culture across generations (Alvarez et al., 1992; Jones & Lorenzo-Hubert, 2008), and "all language learning is cultural learning" (Heath, 1986, as cited in McCardle et al., 1995, p. 64); the loss of home language translates to loss of home culture as part of the price exacted.

Cultural Models for Serving Young Children and Their Families

Standards and measurements of child development are largely the result of North American/European scientific efforts. The values of the EuroAmerican normative culture (Barrera & Corso, 2003) and the behaviors and characteristics of middle-class, white children (Bowman, 1994) have provided templates for child development, child rearing, and early childhood education practices. However, these measures of "normal" development and child-rearing values are challenged by a growing body of literature that acknowledges and explores cultural differences in the ways that children's competence is nurtured and demonstrated (Bowman, 1994; Hanson & Lynch, 2004; Jones & Lorenzo-Hubert, 2008; Peña & Méndez-Pérez, 2006; Phillips & Cooper, 1992; Rogoff, 1990; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) and what might constitute a "disability" or "special need."

Parlakian and Sánchez (2006) remind us that "every interaction we have with a child is a cultural exchange" (p. 56). Caregiving routines and child-rearing traditions reflect the values, beliefs, and cultures of families and communities (Chang & Pulido-Tobiassen, 1994; Hyun, 2007; Santos, Fowler, Corso, & Bruns, 2000). Phillips and Cooper (1992) describe development as occurring within a cultural matrix; babies' innate behavioral and cognitive capacities are shaped over time as they both respond to and influence the environments that surround them. Many educators, parents, researchers, and policy makers urge that family cultures be considered, respected, honored, and built upon when

working with young children and their families. Particularly in EI, identifying and integrating home cultures is considered an essential element of family-centered services.

Professionals cannot be expected to develop an encyclopedic knowledge of the values and practices of all cultures, particularly since these are not static entities, but they should find ways to learn about and understand the practices and values of the families they work with. Only then can they effectively integrate family caregiving practices, beliefs, and goals into their work with children and families (Jones & Lorenzo-Hubert, 2008; Meléndez, 2005).

Understanding Disability within a Cultural Context

Within the field of EI, it is important to recognize cultural models that may inform how young children are cared for and to consider potential cultural differences in how families and professionals understand and respond to disabilities. The medical model that undergirds understandings and practices regarding disabilities in the United States (Figueroa & Garcia, 1994) is very different from the ways that some other cultures consider disabilities. Anderson and Fenichel (1989) offer examples of the disability beliefs and practices of different cultural groups, such as some Asian American populations' attribution of religious explanations to the origins of disabilities, which affects their pursuit of and responses to intervention efforts. Grossman (1998) discusses how disability and educational practices and options for individuals with disabilities are social constructions that differ across cultures. She presents Central American and Caribbean concepts of what qualifies as disability, what the origins of disability are, and what are considered optimal responses to disability. Cultural values regarding social and academic skills, the role of families, and what constitutes a rewarding and happy life all contribute to these concepts.

In her book *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, Anne Fadiman (1997) describes the dramatic struggle between American doctors and a Hmong family as they try to negotiate disparate values and beliefs regarding the care of a young child diagnosed with severe epilepsy. The struggle illustrates how a culture's history and its religious and medical beliefs affect how its members conceive the origins, meaning, and treatment of disability. While the Kao family diagnosed their daughter's problem as an illness caused by a spirit that summoned her soul to flee her body and become lost, the medical professionals around them considered the child's epilepsy to be a neurological disorder. Instead of finding ways to integrate Western medicine with Hmong shamanistic healing, the two groups adopted approaches to healing that collided in ways that compromised both groups' efforts and led to tragedy. Fadiman advocates a kind of cultural brokerage that includes mindfulness of the beliefs and values of the families served to strengthen professionals' ability to provide services that integrate and build on families' convictions and capacities.

Cultural Alchemy: Mining Families' Resources

Understandings of culture have evolved over the last 15 years (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). The idea of culture as a collection of fixed beliefs, values, and practices shared by a grouping of people (most often defined by race, ethnicity, and national origin) is being transformed. Current conceptions of culture consider it to be created and combined fluidly through everyday practices and processes.

González et al. (2005) use the term "funds of knowledge" to describe the resources that children carry with them from their homes and to endorse the idea that professionals should work with families to identify these competencies and integrate them into children's learning opportunities.

I consider this process of valuing and "mining" the resources found in families to be part of a sacred alchemy. Alchemy is the magical process of combining base metals to turn them into gold. Whether the educational resources found in children's homes are called family funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005), intergenerational wisdom (Soto, 1991), the curriculum of the home (Leichter, 1996), family's collective wisdom (Valdés, 1996), or cultural capital (Lareau, 1989), they are invaluable resources, veritable "gold" when mined and applied to working with children and families.

Such work with families is dedicated to uncovering the everyday practices of the home and blending

them into efforts to serve children and families. A number of educators and researchers have taken on this task of alchemy in ways that recognize the potential yield of combining family languages and other elements with formal education or intervention practices.

Rogovin (1998) provides an example of engaging in this art of alchemy with her first-grade classes. Using an inquiry-based curriculum, she taught her classes the use of interviews, then created opportunities for teams of first-grade researchers to interview and learn from their own family members, neighbors, peers, and people of all walks of life. For example, one team made a study of child labor, for which they incorporated interviews and social action elements, including performing a play about child labor and writing to companies to protest their use of child labor. By helping the students access resources that included their own family members, the teacher not only addressed academic skills but also showed that she valued their histories and cultures in ways that are likely to build self-esteem, reduce prejudice, and promote social justice.

Leichter's work (1996, 1997) embodies an alchemy of learning from families that she calls building on the curriculum of the home. She contends that "achieving an adequate picture of the language, history, style, and rich culture of the home requires special efforts" (Leichter, 1996, p. 79). Leichter outlines several strategies that can be used to learn about the educational resources and opportunities present within families. Studies that access family memories, family photographs, family stories, and families as environments for literacy contribute to "enlarging definitions of education and intelligence" (p. 81).

Becoming Cultural and Linguistic Alchemists in Early Intervention

This process of alchemy is nowhere more vital than in EI, where services are designed to be family centered. When EI services are delivered in the home, both the potential for and importance of mining family resources are compounded. Lee, Ostrosky,

Bennett, and Fowler (2003) examined the extent to which EI professionals considered cultural factors important to their work with children and families and the ways that their practices reflected recommendations cited in the literature for providing culturally appropriate services. Statistical analyses revealed that when the professionals ranked specific practices "most important" they also reported implementing those practices in their work with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. A majority of the respondents ranked suggestions related to family involvement and service delivery as important, but fewer considered learning about specific cultures to be important. Respondents cited shortages of time, related training, and appropriate materials as impediments to providing culturally and linguistically sensitive services. The researchers concluded that "a potential misconception is that providing culturally appropriate services to families and their young children with special needs is an additional responsibility, rather than an integral part of providing quality EI services" (Lee et al., 2003, p. 292).

Looking inward to recognize one's own unique cultural perspectives can be an initial step in professional preparation to work with diverse children and families (Parlakian & Sánchez, 2006). Harry (1997) suggests that in our work with children and families in EI we need to develop awareness of our own deeply held belief systems and assume a posture of reciprocity in collaborations:

If you feel like you're bending over backwards, it may be that you're holding fast to your own beliefs while making concessions you don't agree with on the basis of which you don't understand. As you make these concessions, you're actually turning away from the person you're trying to help and your posture is easily perceived as one of condescension. You need to go back to your own starting point, note the cultural basis of that position, then lean toward the parent in order to grasp the basis of theirs. (p. 72)

Harry (1997) identifies four important categories of belief systems that teachers can reflect on in

By clicking on this "[Comments Box](#)," readers may comment on this article. Selected substantive contributions will be posted on this Web site for further discussion.



order to be more sensitive and responsive in their work with children and families: (1) beliefs about groups of people, (2) beliefs about the meaning of disability, (3) beliefs about parenting styles, and (4) beliefs about goal setting. Culturally based preferences in these four areas can cause conflict between families and early childhood professionals when negotiating issues of caregiving routines, interpersonal interactions, and even children's toys and play activities. Developing reflective intrapersonal awareness and skills to apply to interpersonal work with families can be considered an application of the use of self-construct in relationship-based intervention in the infant and family field (Heffron, Ivins, & Weston, 2005).

Louw and Avenant's (2002) theoretical framework for designing and implementing culturally congruent EI programs considers an understanding of cultural factors essential to building linkages between families and professionals. Family structure, styles of communication, beliefs regarding the nature of infants, child-rearing practices, and perceptions of disabilities can vary by culture (Louw & Avenant, 2002), profoundly influencing families' responses to EI.

Family languages, family cultures, and family partnerships with professionals are embedded in each other and have the potential to be honored, accessed, and employed as resources in EI work with young children and families. However, just as they contribute to each other, when applied to work with young children and families, when squandered, they may also detract from each other resulting in potential harm to the children, their families, and the family-professional relationships. For example, if families' languages are not honored, families' cultures and their relationships with professionals both may be positioned at risk.

References

- Adair, Jennifer, & Tobin, Joseph. (2008). Listening to the voices of immigrant parents. In Celia Genishi & A. Lin Goodwin (Eds.), *Diversities in early childhood education: Rethinking and doing* (pp. 137-150). New York: Routledge.
- Administration for Children and Families. (2001). *Head Start program information report: National summary*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Alvarez, Rosario; Barton, Alice; Clark, Gretel; Keenan, James F.; LaLyre, Yvonne; MacNeill, Carol; & O'Brien, Maryann. (1992). *Young lives: Many languages, many cultures*. Boston: Massachusetts Department of Education.
- Anderson, Penny P.; & Fenichel, Emily Schrag. (1989). *Serving culturally diverse families of infants and toddlers with disabilities*. Washington, DC: National Center for Clinical Infant Programs.
- Bardige, Betty, & Bardige, M. Kori. (2008). Talk to me, Baby! Supporting language development in the first three years. *Zero to Three*, 29(1), 4-11.
- Barrera, Isaura, & Corso, Robert M. (with Macpherson, Dianne). (2003). *Skilled dialogue: Strategies for responding to cultural diversity in early childhood*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
- Blum-Martinez, Rebecca. (2002). Parents as guardians of the mother tongue. In Lourdes Diaz Soto (Ed.), *Making a difference in the lives of bilingual/bicultural children* (pp. 131-142). New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Bowman, Barbara T. (1994). *Cultural diversity and academic achievement*. Retrieved October 10, 2005, from <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/leadrshp/le0bow.htm>
- Brice, Alejandro, & Roseberry-McKibbin, Celeste. (2001). Choice of languages in instruction: One language or two? *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 33(4), 10-15.
- Chang, Hedy Nai-lin, & Pulido-Tobiassen, Dora. (1994). The critical importance of cultural and

linguistic continuity for infants and toddlers. *Zero to Three*, 15(2), 13-17.

Chomsky, Noam. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Cisneros, Sandra. (1984). *The house on Mango Street*. New York: Random House.

Collier, Virginia P. (1995). Acquiring a second language for school. *Directions in Language and Education*, 1(4), 1-12.

Crawford, James. (2002). *Making sense of census 2000*. Retrieved March 30, 2010, from <http://www.languagepolicy.net/excerpts/makingsense.html>

Cummins, James. (1976). *The influence of bilingualism on cognitive growth: A synthesis of research findings and explanatory hypotheses* (Working Papers on Bilingualism no. 9). Toronto: Bilingual Education Project, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Cummins, James. (1979). Linguistic interdependence and the educational development of bilingual children. *Review of Educational Research*, 49(2), 222-251.

Cummins, Jim. (1981). Four misconceptions about language proficiency in bilingual education. *Journal of the National Association of Bilingual Education*, 5(3), 31-45.

Cummins, Jim. (1989). Language and literacy acquisition in bilingual contexts. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*; 10(1), 17-31.

DeCasper, Anthony J., & Fifer, William P. (1980). Of human bonding: Newborns prefer their mothers' voices. *Science*, 208(4448), 1174-1176.

DeCasper, Anthony J., & Spence, Melanie J. (1986). Prenatal maternal speech influences newborns' perceptions of speech sounds. *Infant Behavior and Development*, 9(2), 133-150.

Dyson, Anne Haas, & Genishi, Celia. (1993). *Visions of children as language users: Research on language and language education in early childhood*. In Bernard Spodek (Ed.), *Handbook of research on the education of young children* (pp. 122-136). New York: Macmillan.

Fadiman, Anne. (1997). *The spirit catches you and you fall down: A Hmong child, her American doctors, and the collision of two cultures*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Figueroa, Richard A., & Garcia, Eugene. (1994). Issues in testing students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. *Multicultural Education*, 2(1), 10-18.

Fleischman, Paul. (1997). *Seedfolks*. New York: HarperCollins.

Fort, Pilar, & Stechuk, Robert. (2008). The cultural responsiveness and dual language education project. *Zero to Three*, 29(1), 24-28.

García, Ofelia; Evangelista, Isabel; Martínez, Mabel; Disla, Carmen; & Paulino, Bonifacio. (1988). Spanish language use and attitudes: A study of two New York City communities. *Language in Society*, 17(4), 475-511.

Genesee, Fred. (2008). Early dual language learning. *Zero to Three*, 29(1), 17-23.

Genesee, Fred; Paradis, Johanne; & Crago, Martha B. (2004). *Dual language development and disorders: A handbook on bilingualism and second language learning*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Gildersleeve-Neumann, Christina E.; Kester, Ellen S.; Davis, Barbara L.; & Pena, Elizabeth D. (2008).

English speech sound development in preschool-aged children from bilingual English-Spanish environments. *Language, Speech, and Human Services in Schools*, 39(3), 314-328.

González, Norma; Moll, Luis C.; & Amanti, Cathy. (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Grossman, Shana R. (1998). Cultural differences in conceptions of disability: Central America and the Caribbean. *TESOL Journal*, 7(5), 38-41.

Guardado, Martin. (2002). Loss and maintenance of first language skills: Case studies of Hispanic families in Vancouver. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 58(3), 341-363.

Hakuta, Kenji. (1986). *Mirror of language: The debate on bilingualism*. New York: Basic Books.

Hamayan, Else V., & Damico, Jack Samuel. (1991). Developing and using a second language. In Else V. Hamayan & Jack S. Damico (Eds.), *Limiting bias in the assessment of bilingual students* (pp. 39-75). Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Hamers, Josiane F., & Blanc, Michel H. A. (1989). *Bilinguality and bilingualism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hanson, Marci J., & Lynch, Eleanor W. (2004). *Understanding families: Approaches to diversity, disability, and risk*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Hardin, Belinda J.; Mereoiu, Mariana; Hung, Hsuan-Fang; & Roach-Scott, Marisa. (2009). Investigating parent and professional perspectives concerning special education services for preschool Latino children. *Early Childhood Education*, 37(2), 93-102.

Harry, Beth. (1997). Leaning forward or bending backwards: Cultural reciprocity in working with families. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 21(1), 62-72.

Harry, Beth; Kalyanpur, Maya; & Day Monimalika. (1999). *Building cultural reciprocity with families: Case studies in special education*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Heffron, Mary Claire; Ivins, Barbara; & Weston, Donna R. (2005). Finding an authentic voice—use of self: Essential learning processes for relationship-based work. *Infants and Young Children*, 18(4), 323-336.

Hyun, Eunsook. (2007). Cultural complexity in early childhood: Images of contemporary young children from a critical perspective. *Childhood Education*, 83(5), 261-266.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, 20 U.S.C., 1400 et seq.

Jones, Wendy, & Lorenzo-Hubert, Isabella. (2008). The relationship between language and culture. *Zero to Three*, 29(1), 11-16.

Joseph, Gail E., & Cohen, Rachel Chazan. (2000). *Celebrating cultural and linguistic diversity in Head Start*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Kagan, Sharon L., & Garcia, Eugene E. (1991). Educating culturally and linguistically diverse preschoolers: Moving the agenda. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 6(3), 427-444.

Kouritzin, Sandra, G. (1999). *Face[t]s of first language loss*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Lareau, Annette. (1989). *Home advantage: Social class and parental intervention in elementary education*. New York: Falmer Press.

Lee, Hwa; Ostrosky, Michaelene M.; Bennett, Tess; & Fowler, Susan A. (2003). Perspectives of early intervention professionals about culturally-appropriate practices. *Journal of Early Intervention, 25*(4), 281-295.

Leichter, Hope Jensen. (1996). Creative intelligence of families: Bridges to school learning. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 29*(1), 77-85.

Leichter, Hope Jensen. (1997). Learning from families. In Robert L. Sinclair & Ward J. Ghory (Eds.), *Reaching and teaching all children: Grassroots efforts that work*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Louw, Brenda, & Avenant, Carina. (2002). Culture as context for intervention: Developing a culturally congruent early intervention program. *International Pediatrics, 17*(3), 145-150.

Macaulay, Ronald. (1980). *Generally speaking: How children learn language*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Marcus, Susanne D., & Ames, Margery E. (1998). Reaching linguistically and culturally diverse young learners with disabilities. *TESOL Journal, 7*(4), 10-17.

McCardle, Peggy; Kim, Julia; Grube, Carl; & Randall, Virginia. (1995). An approach to bilingualism in early intervention. *Infants and Young Children, 7*(3), 63-73.

McLaughlin, Barry. (1995). *Fostering second language development in young children: Principles and practices*. Santa Cruz, CA: National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning.

Meléndez, Luisiana. (2005). Parental beliefs and practices around early self-regulation: The impact of culture and immigration. *Infants and Young Children, 18*(2), 136-146.

Méndez-Pérez, Anita. (2000). Mexican American mothers' perceptions and beliefs about language acquisition in infants and toddlers with disabilities. *Bilingual Research Journal, 24*(3), 277-295.

National Association for the Education of Young Children, (1995). NAEYC position statement: Responding to linguistic and cultural diversity: Recommendations for effective early childhood education. *Young Children, 51*(2), 4-12.

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. (2009). *Overview to the Part C Program under IDEA*. Retrieved March 10, 2010, from <http://www.nectac.org/partc/partc.asp#overview>

Ortiz, Alba A. (1984). Choosing the language of instruction for exceptional bilingual children. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 16*(3), 202-206.

Páez, Mariela M.; Tabors, Patton O.; & López, Lisa M. (2007). Dual language and literacy development of Spanish-speaking preschool children. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 28*(2), 85-102.

Parlakian, Rebecca, & Sánchez, Sylvia Y. (2006). Cultural influences on early language and literacy teaching practices. *Zero to Three, 27*(1), 52-57.

Peal, Elizabeth, & Lambert, Wallace E. (1962). The relation of bilingualism to intelligence. *Psychological Monographs, 76*(27, Whole No. 546).

Peña, Elizabeth D., & Méndez-Pérez, Anita. (2006). Individualistic and collectivistic approaches to language learning. *Zero to Three, 27*(1), 34-45.

Phillips, Carol Brunson, & Cooper, Renatta M. (1992). Cultural dimensions of feeding relationships. *Zero to Three, 12*(5), 10-13.

- Puig, Victoria. (2003). [How individuals use and feel about the languages in their lives: An exploratory case study of two families]. Unpublished raw data.
- Puig, Victoria. (2008). *Cultural and linguistic alchemy: Mining the resources of Spanish speaking families receiving early intervention services*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.
- Ramsey, Patricia G. (2004). *Teaching and learning in a diverse world*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Rodriguez, M. Victoria. (1998). Problems and issues in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse preschool children with disabilities. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 31(2), 39-46.
- Rodriguez, Richard. (1983). *Hunger for memory: The education of Richard Rodriguez*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Rogoff, Barbara. (1990). *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rogovin, Paula. (1998). *Classroom interviews: A world of learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Sánchez, Sylvia Y., & Thorp, Eva K. (1998). Policies on linguistic continuity: A family's right, a practitioner's choice, or an opportunity to create shared meaning and a more equitable relationship? *Zero to Three*, 17(6), 12-20.
- Santos, Rosa Milagros; Fowler, Susan A.; Corso, Robert M.; & Bruns, Deborah A. (2000). Acceptance, acknowledgment, and adaptability: Selecting culturally and linguistically appropriate early childhood materials. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 32(3), 14-22.
- Schieffelin, Bambi B., & Ochs, Elinor (Eds.). (1986). *Language socialization across cultures*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Smrekar, Jocelynn, L. (2002). Early childhood bilingual classrooms. In Lourdes Diaz Soto (Ed.), *Making a difference in the lives of bilingual/bicultural children* (pp. 173-184). New York: Peter Lang.
- Snow, Catherine E., & Hoefnagel-Hoehle, Marian. (1978). The critical period for language acquisition: Evidence from second language learning. *Child Development*, 49(4), 1114-1118.
- Soto, Lourdes Diaz. (1991). Understanding bilingual/bicultural young children. *Young Children*, 46(2), 30-36.
- Tabors, Patton O. (1997). *One child, two languages: A guide for preschool educators of children learning English as a second language*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
- Tabors, Patton O.; Paéz, Mariela M.; & López, Lisa M. (2003). Dual language abilities of bilingual four-year olds: Initial findings from the early childhood study of language and literacy development of Spanish-speaking children. *NABE Journal of Research and Practice*, 1(1), 70-91.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2007, July 16). *Hispanic heritage month 2007: Sept. 15–Oct. 15* (Facts for Features No. CBO7--FF.14) . Retrieved March 30, 2010, from http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/010327.html
- Valdés, Guadalupe. (1996). *Con respeto—Bridging the distances between culturally diverse families and schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wang, X. Christine, & Aldridge, Jerry. (2007). Re-examining diversity issues in childhood education. *Childhood Education, 83*(5), 258-259.

Wong Fillmore, Lily. (1991). When learning a second language means losing the first. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 6*(3), 323-346.

Wong Fillmore, Lily. (1992). Language and cultural issues in early education. In Sharon L. Kagan (Ed.), *The care and education of America's young children: Obstacles and opportunities* (90th yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education). Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education.

Yoshida, Hanako. (2008). The cognitive consequences of early bilingualism. *Zero to Three, 29*(2), 26-30.

Author Information

Dr. Victoria I. Puig is an assistant professor in the Early Childhood, Elementary, and Literacy Education Department at Montclair State University in New Jersey. She earned her Ed.D. degree in Early Childhood Special Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. Dr. Puig has worked as a bilingual preschool special educator and early interventionist and as an Early Head Start program coordinator. She is pursuing two lines of research—one examines the needs and sources of support of new professionals in early childhood education, and the other explores how the cultural and linguistic resources of Spanish-speaking families are integrated into early childhood education programs.

Victoria I. Puig
Montclair State University
Montclair, NJ 07043
Email: puigy@mail.montclair.edu

Early Childhood Research & Practice (ECRP) is a peer-reviewed electronic journal.

ECRP Web Address: <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu>

ISSN 1524-5039

ECRP was established February 27, 1999.