

# CLD (Cultural and Linguistic Diversity) Corner

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The CLD Corner was created in an effort to respond to questions on cultural and linguistic diversity. Questions are answered by members of the TSHA task force on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity. Members for the 2007-2008 year include **Ellen Stubbe Kester (co-chair), Lynette Austin, Gina Glover (co-chair), Katsura Aoyama, Nelcy L. Cardenas, Catherine Carrasco-Lynch, Benigno Valles, Julia Peña and Jacqueline Lopez.** Submit your questions to [gina.glover@fwisd.org](mailto:gina.glover@fwisd.org). Look for responses from the CLD Task Force on TSHA's website and in the *Communicologist*.

The CLD Task Force is now offering half- and full-day trainings for school districts, Education Service Centers, university programs and other agencies on **Assessment and Intervention with CLD Populations.** For information, contact Gina Glover at [gina.glover@fwisd.org](mailto:gina.glover@fwisd.org).

## Debunking the Myths of Bilingualism

Is bilingualism bad for your kids? Do bilingual children learn to talk later than monolinguals? Are bilingual individuals less intelligible and less intelligent than monolingual speakers? There are numerous myths about bilingualism.

### MYTH #1

**People who code-switch (mix two languages) have a language deficit and do not know either language well.**

Code-switching is used for a number of reasons but does not necessarily indicate a language deficit. Sometimes bilingual speakers code-switch for emphasis or to express a term that has a slightly different meaning. A colleague gave the example of "pie de manzana" versus "apple pie." Though translation equivalents, these were two different things to her. One was American apple pie, which tasted and looked very different than Bolivian pie de manzana.

In some regions, code-switching is the norm. It is important to consider a child's language model. If they grow up in a code-switching region, they will likely code-switch. What is important to determine is if they are able to use the languages separately after being sufficiently exposed to non code-switching models.

### MYTH #2

**Children with language impairment should not learn more than one language at a time.**

There is no evidence that being raised with two languages will confuse children with normal language development or children with language impairment. A recent study (Westman, Korkman, Mickos, & Byring, 2008) found that

children with language impairment who came from bilingual backgrounds did not exhibit more severe language problems than monolingual speakers with language impairment.

### MYTH #3

**Children learning two languages are at a cognitive disadvantage compared to monolingual children.**

In the past bilingualism was often viewed as a source of problems in language development. Many poorly designed studies provided support for this idea. A number of recent studies have found a wide array of cognitive benefits related to bilingualism. Executive function, which is thought to aid in one's organizational skills, attention, and inhibitory control, has been found to be superior in bilingual speakers as compared to monolingual speakers (Bialystok, 1999; Bialystok, 2009; Mezzacappa, 2004). See Yoshida (2008) for a thorough discussion of this finding.

Additionally, bilingual speakers have been found to have greater cognitive flexibility in word learning than monolingual speakers. Bilingual speakers were able to learn words with similar meanings more readily than monolingual speakers (Yoshida & Smith, 2007).

## References

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