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## Dealing with multilingualism in ECEC

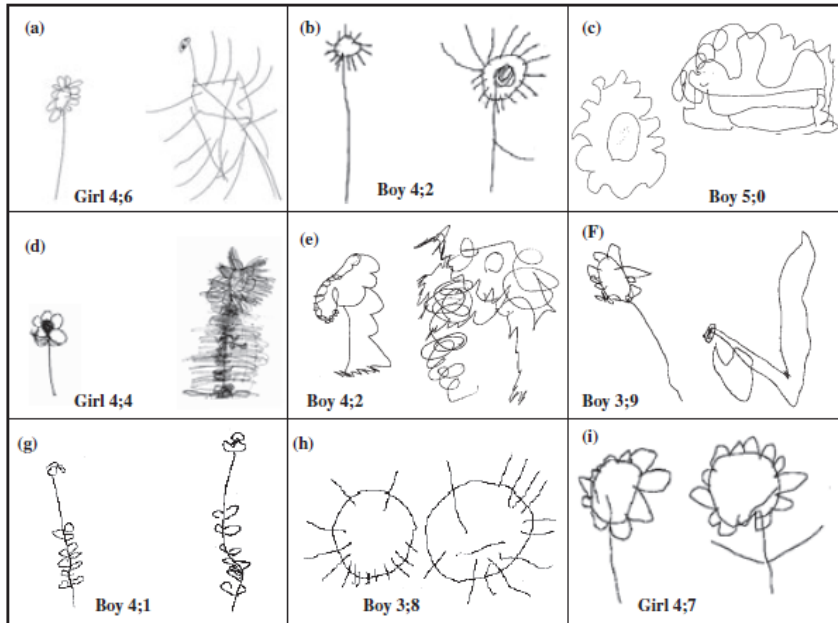
Presentation to the Presidential Conference Diversity and Multilingualism in Early Childhood Education and Care. September 10th, 2015, Luxembourg.

- Becoming near-native proficient in two or more languages is possible.
- Early onset (before age 5 or earlier) of L2 learning seems critical in this regard.
- **Quantity, quality, variation!**
- Several advantages (but there is some debate):
  - Enhanced language and metalinguistic awareness.
  - Cognitive advantages (control functions, memory).
- Disadvantages?
  - Smaller vocabularies in each language.
  - Slower and less accurate lexical processing.

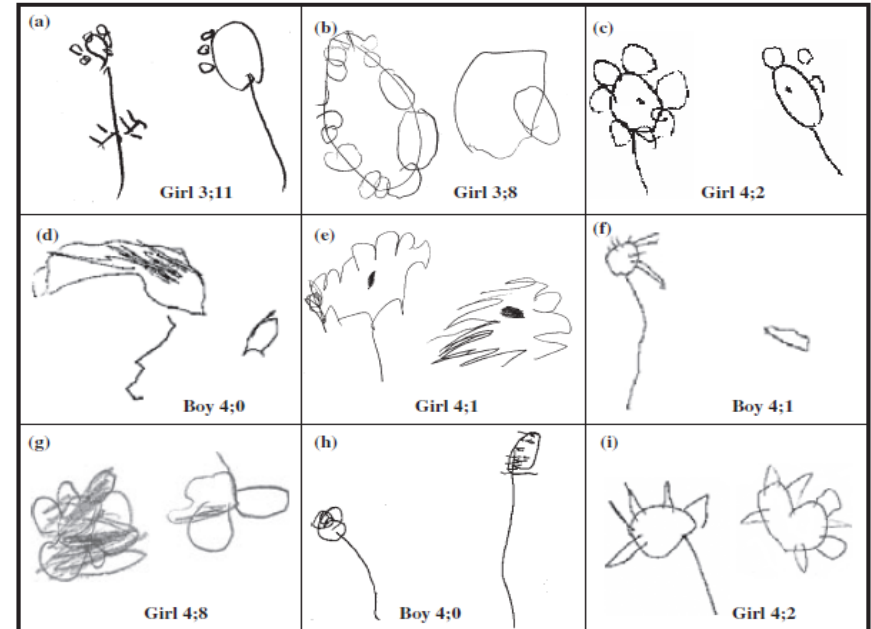


# “Draw a (...) that does not exist”

## English-Hebrew bilingual 4- to 6-yr-olds



## Hebrew monolingual 4- to 6-yr-olds

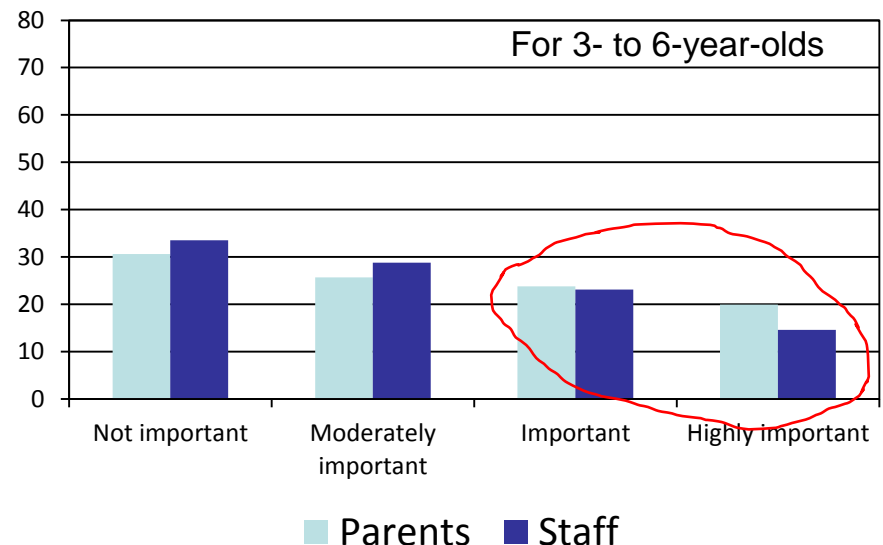
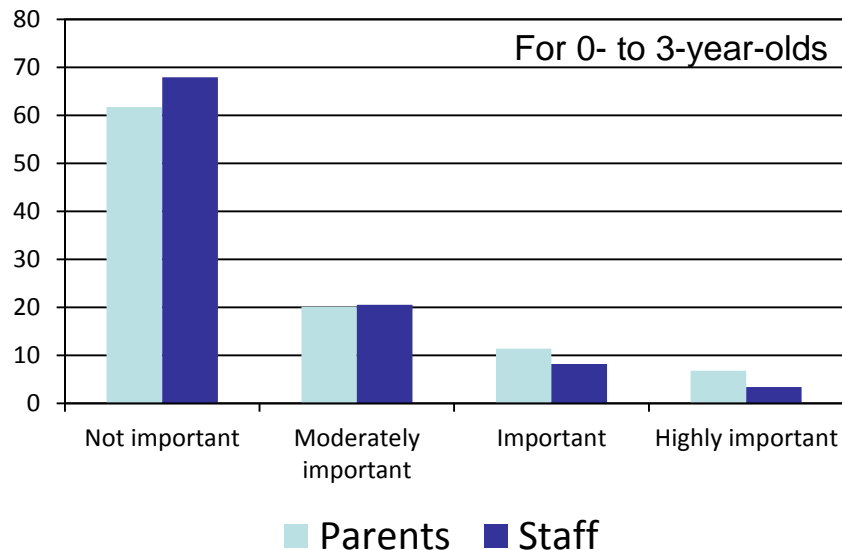


- Bilingual advantage: *cross-category insertion (creativity)*.
- Monolingual disadvantage: *within category deletion*.

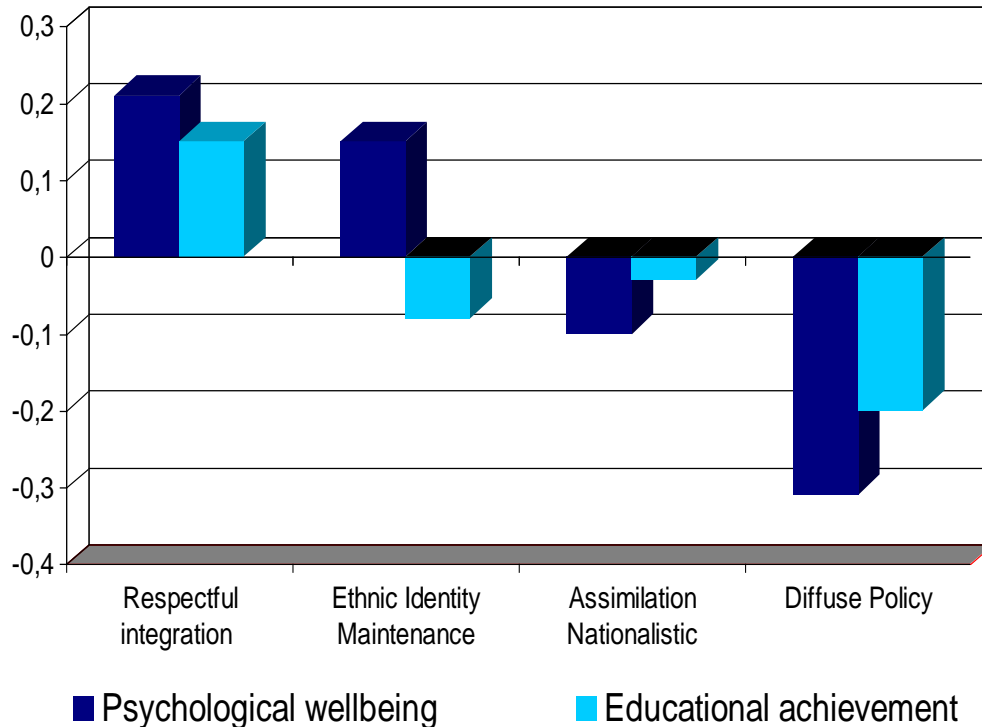
- Many studies across Europe indicate that, if facilitated, parents from language minorities, and also from indigeneous heritage languages, want their children to become proficient bilinguals (Leseman & Slot, 2014).
- Increasing pressure from main-stream (monolingual) parents to introduce dual language programs in ECEC.
- **Paradoxical policy!** For example, strong emphasis on learning the main language and little support for immigrant languages, but... (Helot & Young, 2002).

# Views of parents and staff

- CARE-project: survey among stakeholders (2300+ parents and 2500+ staff from 9 countries).
- “How important is it that the ECEC center supports learning of another language than the main language of a country?” (preliminary, unpublished findings)



# What is society's response?



- European countries vary in diversity policy, from forced assimilation to respectful integration.
- Supporting respectful integration, **including first language support**, seems most effective.
- The worst thing is **not** having a clear policy.

- **CARE-project:** comparison of official curricula of 12 European countries (Sylva et al., 2015).
- Child rights and ‘voice’ are mentioned in some curricula, the importance of addressing cultural diversity is mentioned in most curricula.
- Some of the analysed curricula specify supporting bilingual development – mostly in view of inclusiveness and related to indigenous language minorities (Estonia, Finland, Greece, Italy, Norway,...).
  - “Show interest in, be respectful to, **if possible** support...”
  - Bilingualism in a **special needs** framework.

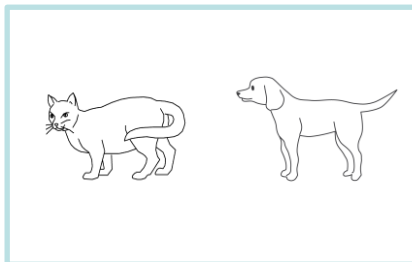
- “Keep the two languages as separate as possible, don’t mix” (e.g. one-parent-one-language strategy; L1 at home, L2 in preschool – “forbid children to use their L1 in preschool”).
- **No support in brain research:** the two languages are represented in the same brain areas and highly interconnected, yet are distinguished from early on – enabling switching and mixing (Petitto, 2009).
- Code-switching is an **ability** that can be deliberately used (Grosjean, 2010) – but a debated view.



- ‘Languaging’ – using the languages inter-mixed, but drawing attention to structural, semantic and pragmatic characteristics and differences.
  - Use of both L1 and L2 at home is related to cognitive advantages (attention, inhibition, switching), but only L1 at home and only L2 in preschool perhaps not.
  - Language awareness may also depend on being able to compare languages within the same situation.
- ‘Objectifying’ language: possible with young children?

# One or two languages at home?

	Bilinguals				Monolinguals	
	Only L1 at home		L1 & L2 at home		Only main Lang	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
<b>Selective attention</b>						
Number of located targets	5.95	1.00	5.90	.71	6.02	.97
Number of repetition errors	.19	.20	<b>.11 †</b>	.16	.09	.23
<b>Visuospatial Memory</b>						
	79.8	15.5	82.3	15.2	82.7	15.7
<b>Delay of gratification</b>						
% of children not looking in bag	74.5 %		77.1 %		74.8 %	
% of children not touching bag	83.3 %		<b>94.3 % *</b>		89.4 %	
% of children not touching gift	79.4 %		<b>94.3 % *</b>		91.8 %	
<b>Verbal inhibition &amp; switching</b>						
	1.98	1.52	<b>2.57 **</b>	1.56	2.11	1.61



**Inhibition/switching**  
 'Make the sound of  
 the other animal'



**Delay of Gratification**  
 'You must try not to  
 touch the present'

- Language learning, especially word learning, should be embedded in conceptually coherent domains.
  - In second language learners, L1 can be used to explain L2 concepts.
- Sensitive interaction (contingently responding, recasting, expanding, extending).
  - Second language learners benefit from intermodal language learning, using gestures, iconic behavior, concrete objects and actions.
- Focus should be on learning **general purpose** conceptual, lexical, grammatical and pragmatic structures that can help children to disclose (educational) discourse and accelerate their language learning from context.

- Barnett et al. (2007):
  - Dual Spanish-English vs. English only immersion program involving bilingual children with Spanish or English as home language.
  - Dual language program for 8 hours a day, 200 days, rotating children by the week to an English only or Spanish only class – all approaches within the High/Scope curriculum.
  - Substantial gains in all measures. No differences regarding English language, but bigger gains in Spanish in the dual program.
- Durán et al. (2010):
  - Transitional full-time dual Spanish-English language program vs. English only - Spanish-only in the first year, English-only in the second year – all approaches within the Creative Curriculum.
  - Gains in all measures. No differences in gains in English, but bigger gains in Spanish in the dual language condition.

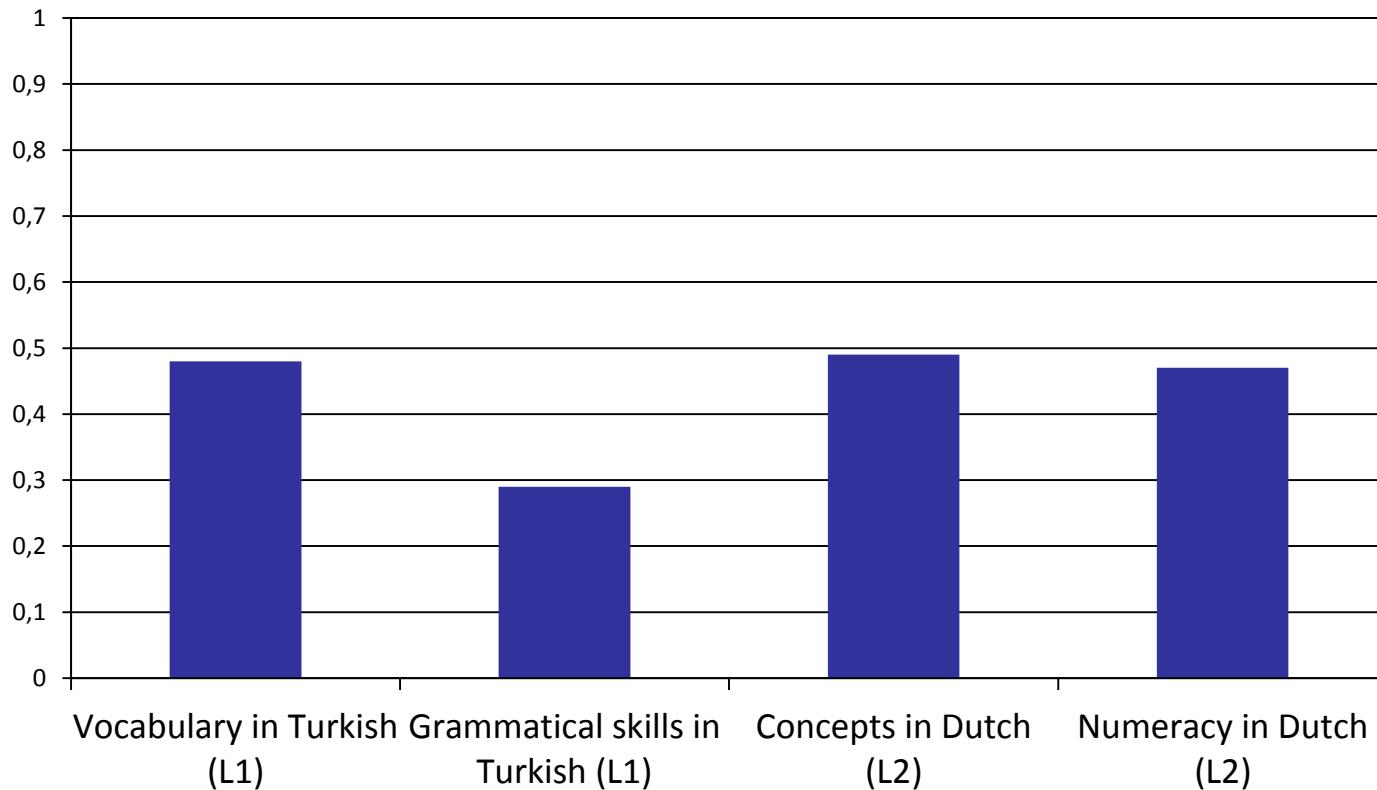
- Can we employ teachers for all desired L1-L2 combinations, who are:
  - Near-native speakers of L1 and L2 (to provide high linguistic quality);
  - And good pedagogues?
- Can we create sufficient time per child for varied dual L1-L2 exposure? How can we organize that in a classroom with several different L1's?
- Need for creative solutions: **involving parents and new educational technology.**

# Involving parents – feasible?

- Dutch HIPPIY (“Opstap”): stimulating language, cognitive and emotional development.
- Mother works with the child 15 minutes per day (30 weeks per year, two years in all) **in the first language.**
- Two-year program, providing educational materials and activities through worksheets.
- Home-visiting and modelling, parent group meetings.

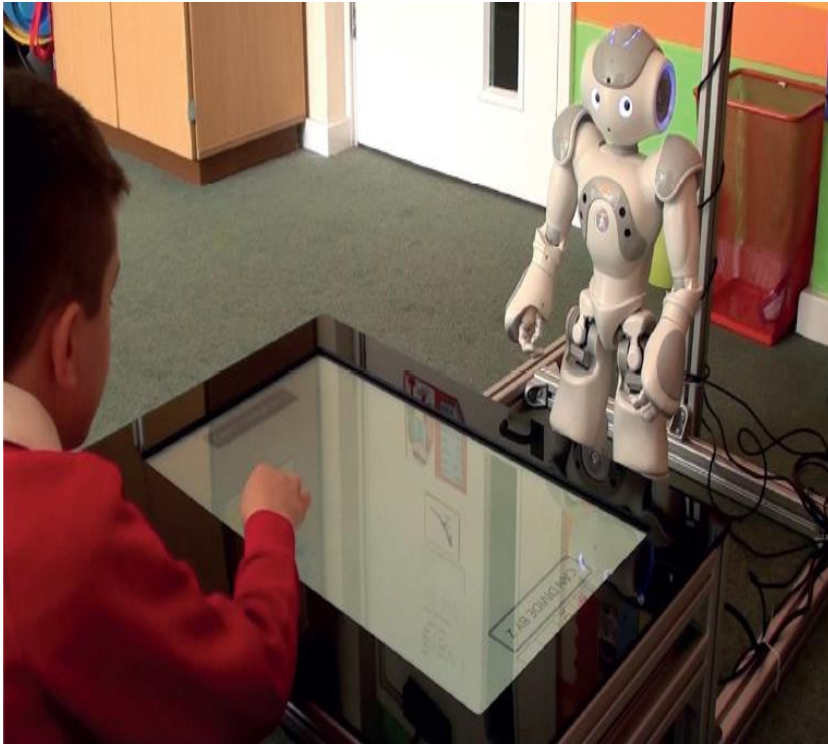


## Standard Effect Sizes - Experimental vs. Control Group (= 0)



- “DIGITAAL” (Digital Language), pilot with an interactive internet-based environment for parents to help them in supporting their children’s L1 development.
- Login via Ipad, laptop, home pc (smartphone).
- Content (a few examples) – **all provided in L1:**
  - Brief, accessible webinars on the topic.
  - Video-clips with ‘models’ of parent-child interaction.
  - Animated story books, narratives with picture books, math games, child-level documentaries (world knowledge....).
  - General child rearing information.
  - Planned: monthly newsmagazine in L1 to support parents’ skill in and use of formal (academic) register in L1.





- High quality speech in L1 and L2.
- Gesturing, acting.
- Interactive, sensitive, playful.
- Conceptual domains:
  - Spatial language.
  - Mathematical language.
  - Narrative and mental state language.

ICT2015/Horizon2020 (2016-2019)

- University of Plymouth
- Tilburg University
- Utrecht University
- Koç University
- University of Bielefeld

- [www.ecec-care.org](http://www.ecec-care.org)
- Sylva, K., Ereky-Stevens, K., & Aricescu, A.-M. (2015). *Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European Early Childhood Education and Care : Overview of European curricula and curriculum template*. Oxford: University of Oxford. (CARE; contract 613318)
- Other selected publications:
  - Blom, E., Küntay, A.C., Messer, M., Verhagen, J., & Leseman, P.P.M. (2014). The benefits of being bilingual: Working memory in bilingual Turkish-Dutch children. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 128, 105-119.
  - Leseman, P.P.M., & Slot, P.L. (2014). Breaking the cycle of poverty: Challenges for European early childhood education and care. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 22(3), 314-326.
  - Leseman, P.P.M., & Van Tuijl, C. (2001). Home support for bilingual development of Turkish 4-6-year-old immigrant children in the Netherlands: Efficacy of a home-based educational program. *Journal of Multicultural and Multilingual Development*, 21, 4, 309-324.
  - Messer, M.H., Verhagen, J., Boom, J., Mayo, A., & Leseman, P.P.M. (2015). Growth of Verbal Short-Term Memory of nonwords varying in phonotactic probability: A longitudinal study with monolingual and bilingual children. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 86, 24-36.
  - Scheele, A.F., Leseman, P.P.M., & Mayo, A.Y. (2010). The home language environment of mono- and bilingual children and their language proficiency. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 31, 117-140.
  - Van Schaik, S.D.M., Huijbregts, S.K., & Leseman, P.P.M. (2014). Cultural diversity in teachers' group-centered beliefs and practices in early childcare. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29(3), 369-377.
  - Verhagen, J., Mulder, H., & Leseman, P.P.M. (2015). Effects of the home language environment on inhibitory control in bilingual three-year-old children. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition* (in press).