

Early Bilingualism through immersion: Learning English as a second language at nursery school

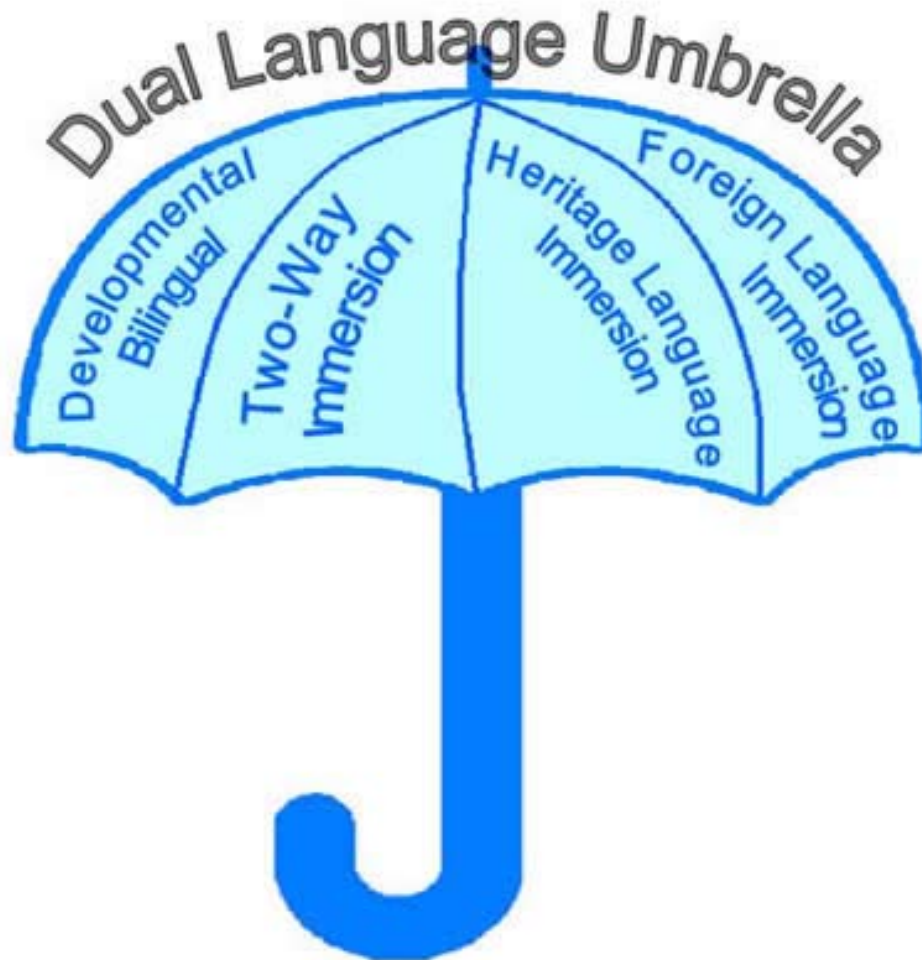


ELIAS – Early Language Intercultural Acquisition Studies
Project: 142355-2008-LLP-DE-Comenius-CMP

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Second Language Learning through Immersion

- ▶ Research on the language acquisition of students in bilingual education programmes (Genesee 2006) has shown that language proficiency in L2 is significantly more advanced compared to traditional L2 instruction
- ▶ At the same time, there is no difference in L1 proficiency between students on bilingual education programmes as opposed to monolingual programmes



Source: Howard, E. R., Olague, N., & Rogers, D. (2003). *The dual language program planner: A guide for designing and implementing dual language programs* (p. 3). Washington, DC and Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.

Reasons for learning an L2

- ▶ Globalisation, advances in electronic communication, migration, preservation of minority languages (Genesee 2006)
- ▶ In Europe, nurseries have become more integrated into the education system in order to make use of children's learning potential
 - to focus on language development in general and second language learning in particular (Wode 2005)

Reasons for learning an L2

- ▶ The UK has introduced the Early years foundation stage profile that all early years providers have to use from September 2008.
- ▶ To assess different aspects of children's early learning and development.
- ▶ Assessment is in the areas of
 - Personal, social and emotional development
 - Communication, language and literacy
 - Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy
 - Knowledge and understanding of the world
 - Physical development
 - Creative development

Early Years Foundation Stage (QCA) and children with EAL

- ▶ “Scale points 4–9 of the communication, language and literacy scales must be assessed in English”.
- ▶ “This has implications for provision. Children must have opportunities to engage in activities that do not depend solely on English for success, and where they can participate in ways that reveal what they know and can do in the security of their home language”.
- ▶ “For children to grow in confidence, their learning and development, and their environment must reflect their cultural and linguistic heritage through, for example, signs, resources, bilingual books and displays. Children’s learning and development must be supported through auditory, visual and kinaesthetic stimuli so they are given every support to achieve well”.

The European Project ELIAS

- ❑ The project started in October 2008, directed by Prof. Dr. Holger Kersten and Kristin Kersten (Univ of Magdeburg)
- ❑ It is funded under the European lifelong learning programme– Comenius
- ❑ The project includes a number of bilingual pre-schools in in Germany (Magdeburg, Kiel, Berlin) as well as partners in Lund, Belgium and the UK
- ❑ The aim of the project is to enhance second language learning and intercultural awareness by evaluating the L2 language development of children in the project schools

UK participation (Hertfordshire)

- ▶ Involves collecting English monolingual comparison data against which the L2 data can be measured
- ▶ Involves observations and evaluations of the language development of children attending a bilingual German/English nursery school in London
- ▶ For the purpose of the current talk, vocabulary and grammar data from the bilingual nursery children is presented

Observations

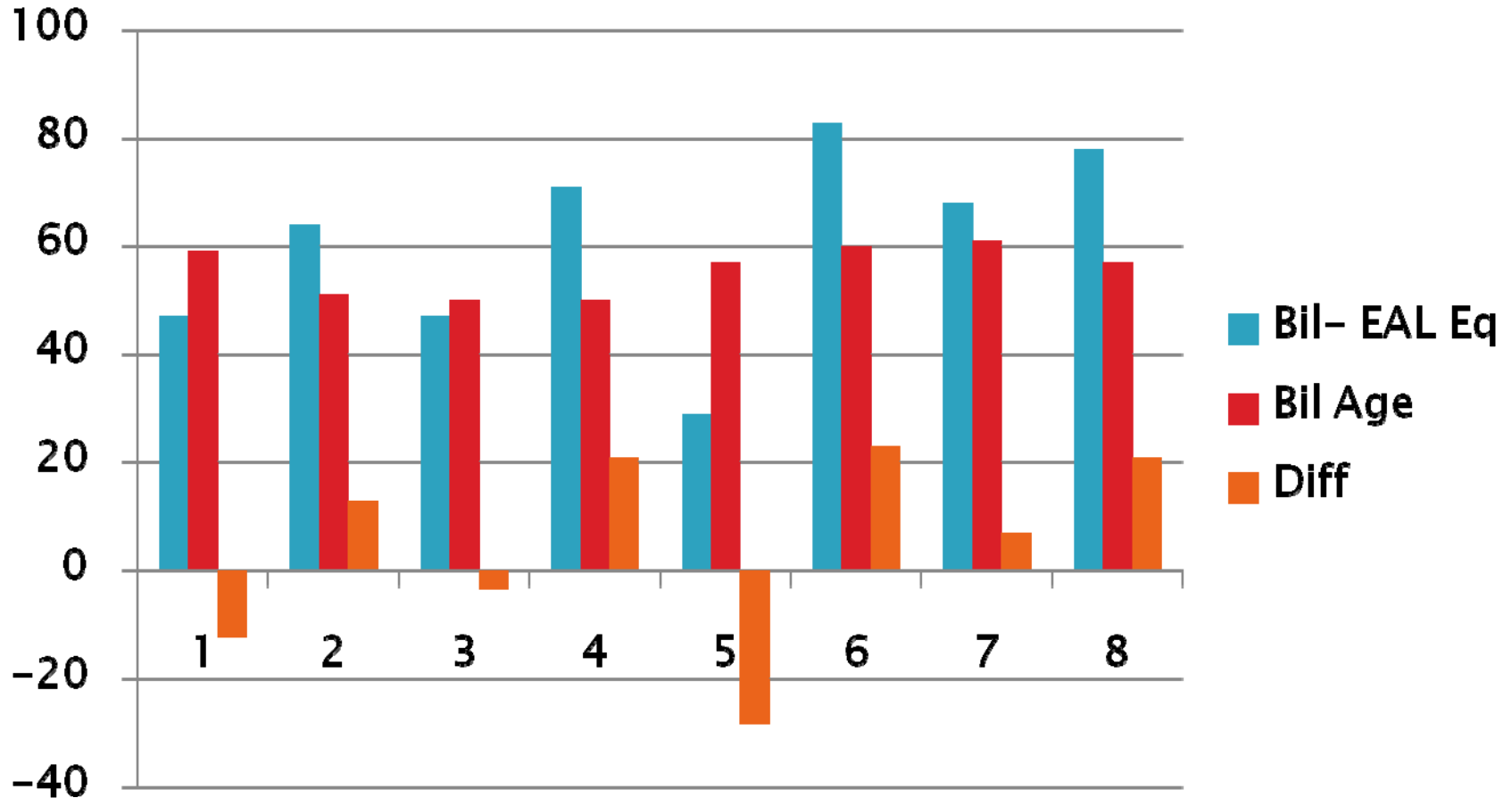
- ▶ All children attend the bilingual nursery and are in one nursery group during the morning
- ▶ The morning is structured and includes free/guided play, circle time, breakfast and outdoor play (if possible)
- ▶ Two native speakers (one English, one German) are present and interact in their language with the children
- ▶ During circle time, either one native speaker interacts with the children, or a book is read and translated by the other native speaker

Methodology

- ▶ 8 children attending the bilingual nursery, aged 4– 5 with a mean age of 4;7
- ▶ Children vary in language background, some have German parents, others have a mixed background
- ▶ Children were tested in terms of their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar in both languages
- ▶ Tests include: English: BPVS, Renfrew, Grammar test (Kersten et al. 2009)
- ▶ German: Vocabulary (AWST, Kiese), Grammar (Trog-D, Fox)

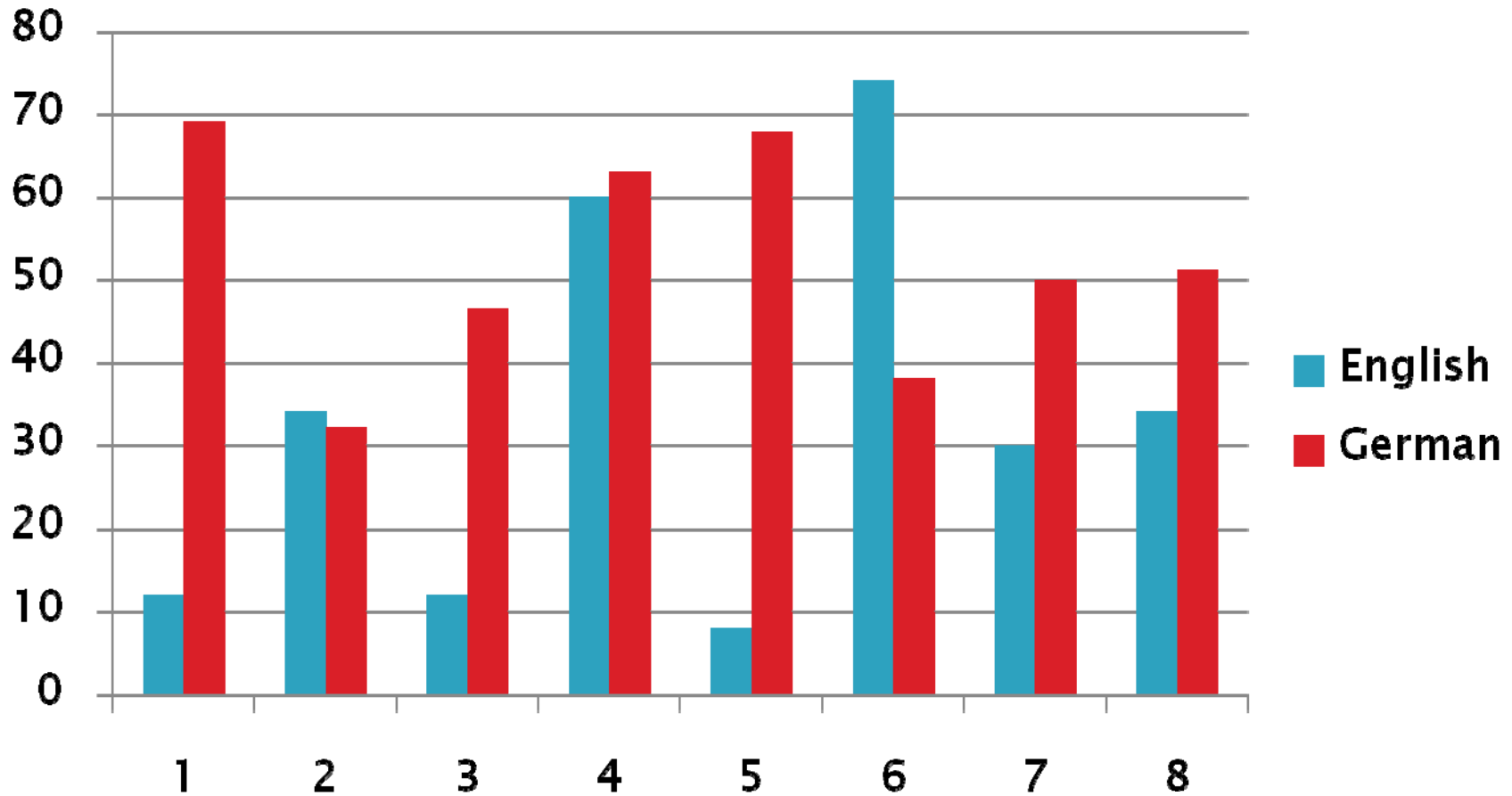
Results on BPVS for individuals

Age Equivalents
in months



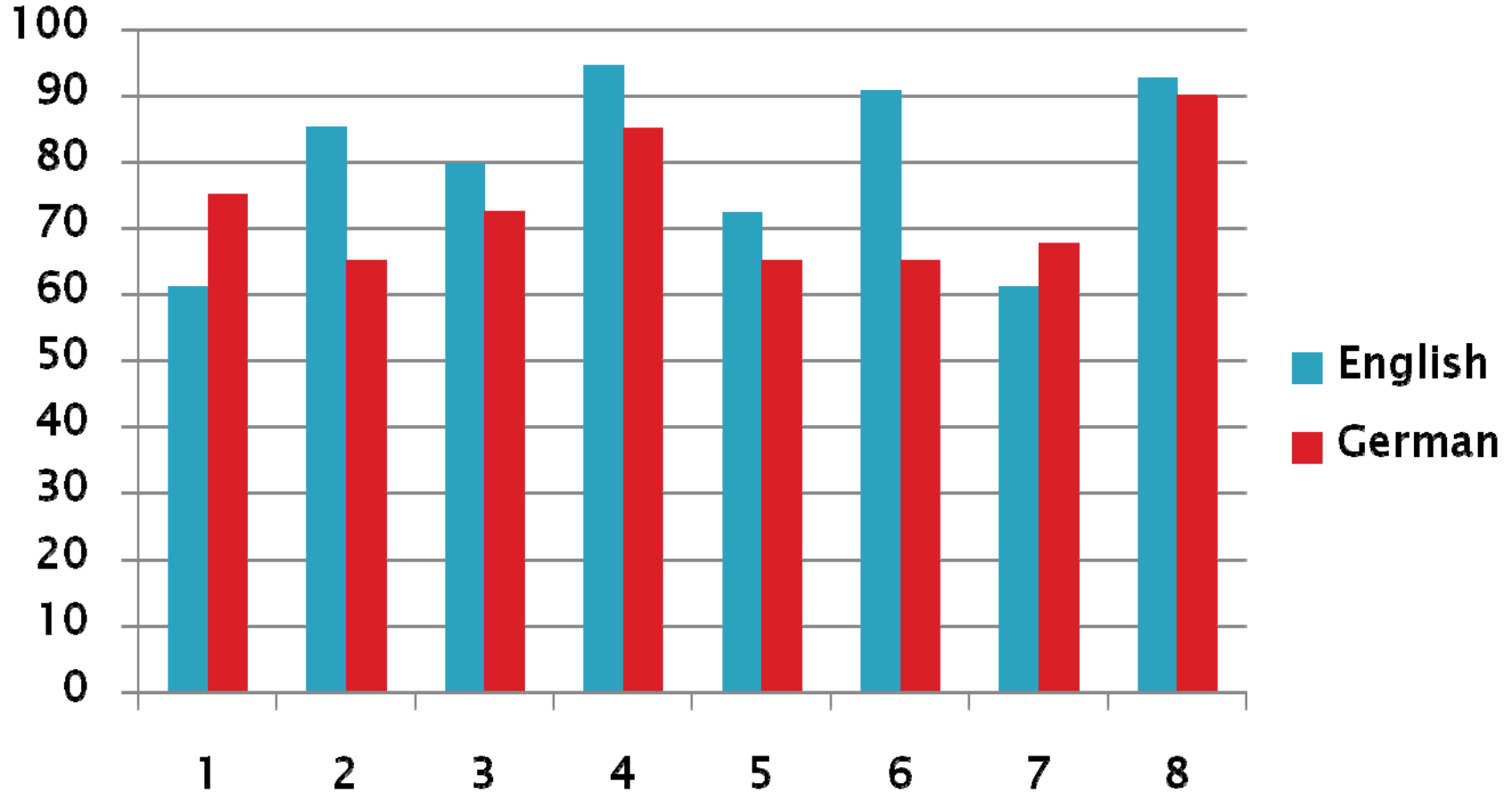
Results on Vocabulary production for individuals

% correct



Results on Grammar comprehension

% correct



Summary

- ▶ Receptive English Vocabulary: All children except two have an EAL equivalent in the BPVs which is similar or higher than their chronological age
- ▶ Productive vocabulary: 5 out of 8 children were able to name more items in German than English; 2 children were balanced and one child was able to name more items in English
- ▶ Grammar comprehension: All children were balanced in their comprehension of grammar across languages

Conclusions

- ▶ For children who are L2 English learners, their passive knowledge is generally in line with the level expected for their age
- ▶ Although all children appear to be able to interact with both nursery teachers, the level of productive vocabulary varies between children and across languages
- ▶ On the other hand, children's comprehension of grammar seems to be remarkably consistent across children and languages



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