

Patterns of cross-linguistic influence in Mandarin-English bilingual language development

Eli Angstadt-Leto, Dr. Eve Higby

Problem

- There is a lack of normative data on the language development of bilingual children, especially those from typologically distinct language pairs such as English and Mandarin Chinese.
- This lack of data can lead to bilingual children being both under- and over-diagnosed with language disorders (Winter, 2001).
- The population of Mandarin-English bilingual children continues to grow in the U.S., making the need for normative data on Mandarin-English bilingual language development urgent in order to guide Speech and Language Pathologists serving this population.

Purpose

1. Review published research on Mandarin-English bilingual language development in order to identify patterns of language-specific cross-linguistic interactions with the goal of providing insights into typical patterns of language development in this population that could lead to clinical improvements and directions for future research.
2. Push back against common narratives about bilingualism rooted in deficit frameworks by advocating for frameworks of empowerment.

Background

- **Cross-linguistic influence** refers to the ways in which the languages of a bi- or multilingual individual affect each other in that individual's speech or language patterns. We seek to identify the patterns of cross-linguistic influence that are specific to Mandarin-English bilingualism.
- The **multicompetence model** (Cook, 2008) asserts that differences in the patterns of language use between bilinguals and monolinguals do not reflect a failure of bilingual children to learn the language fully but instead are the natural and expected result of differing language experiences. Most importantly, these differences are not indicative of a language disorder and should not be treated as such.
- Sheng, Lu, and Kan (2011) discovered that 3-5-year-old Mandarin-English bilingual children had smaller single-language vocabularies than age-matched peers, but across-language scoring revealed that **their total vocabulary is equivalent** to age-matched peers.

Mandarin and English are typologically distinct languages.

CONSONANT INVENTORIES

English only Shared

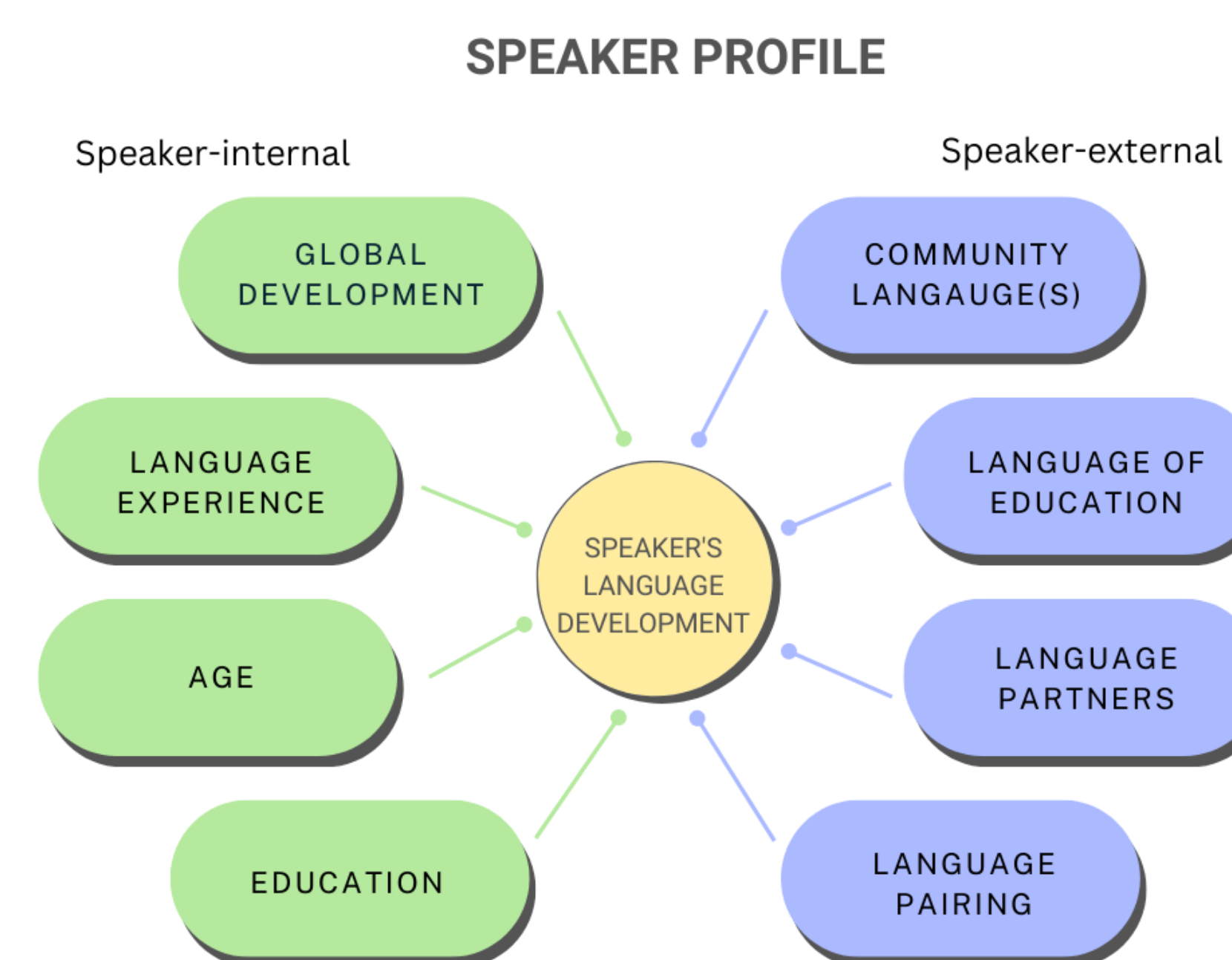
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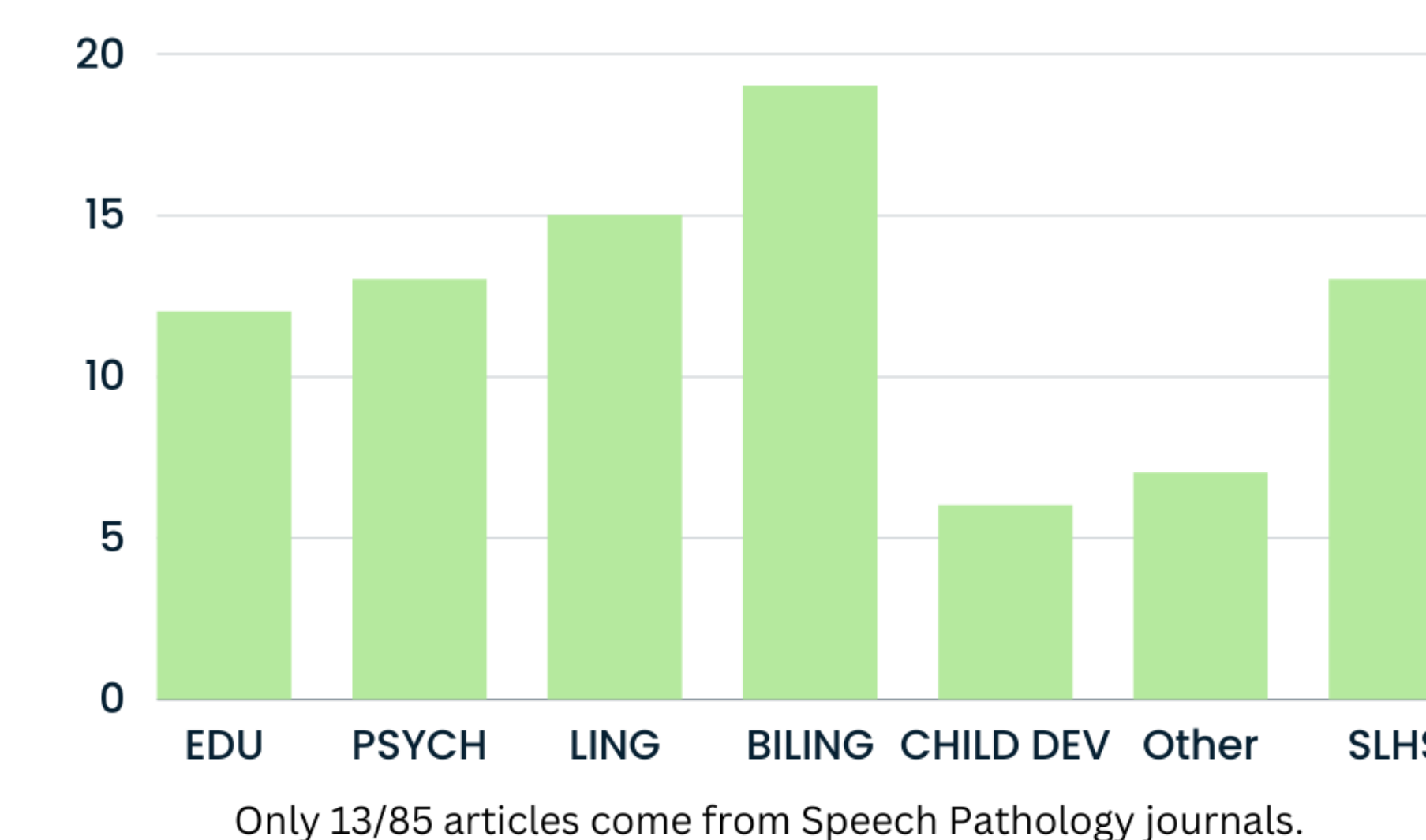
Novel contributions

Our research identifies *language experience*, *age*, and *language of education* as key factors affecting the patterns of cross-linguistic influence for Mandarin-English bilinguals (Kuo et al, 2010, Goriot et al.2019).

Our research applies a multicompetence model to research on Mandarin-English bilingualism from disparate fields and brings the findings to a clinical audience.



WHERE THE RESEARCH WAS FOUND



Clinical implications

- Clinicians should consider the full spectrum of a child's language experience when making diagnostic decisions.
- Cross-linguistic influence from Mandarin to English may result in patterns that may mirror a language disorder but actually represent typical bilingual speech development.

Future directions

Two studies are underway at CSU East Bay with the goal of increasing our understanding of normal Mandarin-English bilingual development. One study is examining the development of two English grammatical morphemes in Mandarin-English bilingual toddlers. The other study is examining the development of pronoun use in Mandarin-English and Spanish-English bilingual children.

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