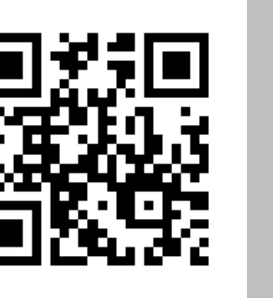


Social Perceptions of Bilingualism and Early Language Development



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BACKGROUND

- Home language environments influence oral language development in both monolingual and bilingual families. (Hart & Risley, 1992; Rowe, 2012; Hoff, et al., 2012; De Houwer, 2014)
- Hamers and Blanc (1982) proposed that for bilingual children, social perceptions of the value of each language would also mediate language acquisition, but this has not been tested empirically.
- We know that parent beliefs about literacy influence reading socialization at home and early language development. (DeBaryshe, 1995)
- For parents who use a non-English language at home, how do they perceive the value of bilingualism in society and for their children? And what is the relationship between beliefs, usage and children's vocabulary acquisition in two languages?

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS

- 210 adults (19-79 yrs old, $m=42$ yrs), representative of U.S. population in geographic region, education, and race
- Recruited through Qualtrics Panels
- Language Background:
 - 23% never learned an add'l language
 - 31% used to speak or tried to learn an add'l language
 - 46% spoke at least two languages
 - 17 Non-Eng. languages spoken, inc. Spanish (70%) & French (8%)
- 109 were parents of children under 18
- 48 were parents of toddlers exposed to English and Spanish**

Toddlers (n=48)

- 46% female, 50% first-born
- Mean age 24 mos (SD=5 mos)
- Language input at home:
 - Half **English**, half **Spanish**
 - Ranged from all **English** to mostly **Spanish**
- Parents similar to full sample, except:
 - Majority Hispanic (79%)
 - Younger ($M=32$ yrs, $SD=9$)

MEASURES

- 20-minute online survey
- Demographic background, language usage, & home literacy activities in most used Non-English language (Luk & Bialystok, 2013; Velázquez, 2014)
- MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories (CDI) short form in English and Spanish (Fenson, et al., 2000; Jackson-Maldonado, Marchman & Fernald, 2013)
- Perception of Bilingualism (POB) attitude scales (1=strongly disagree, 6=strongly agree)

RQ 1: Can perceptions of the value of bilingualism be measured with an attitude scale?

Perception of Bilingualism (POB)

| | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
| The United States should have more than one official language. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Languages in addition to English should be taught in public elementary schools. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Learning a second language helps a person think more creatively. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- POB score is average of 12 items
- POB scores ranged from 1.4 to 5.9 ($M=4$, $SD=.9$)
- $n = 210$
- Cronbach's alpha = .88

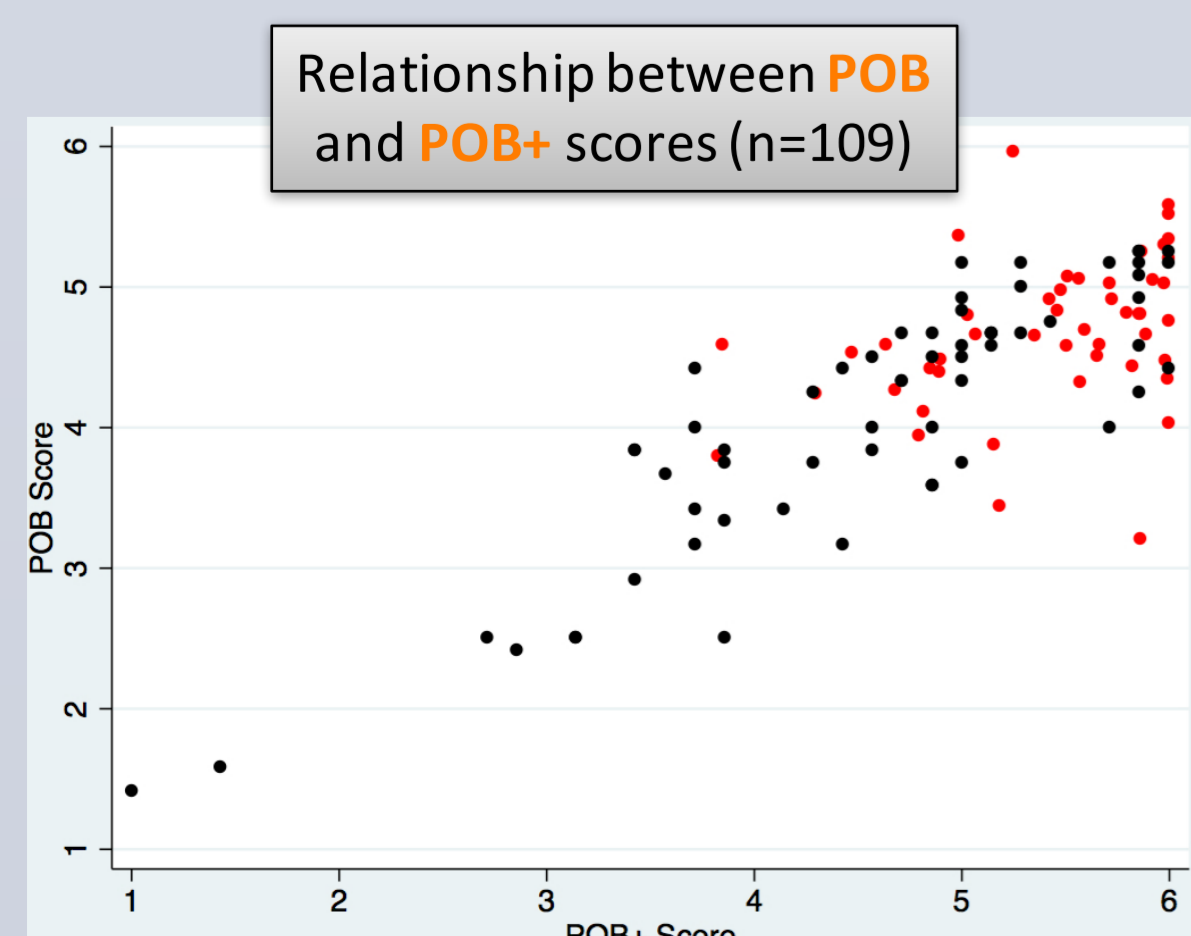
Perception of Bilingualism Pertaining to Respondent's Child (POB+)

| | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
| It is important for my child to learn to read and write more than one language. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Speaking more than one language will help my child compete in the job market. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Speaking more than one language will help my child understand people from different cultural backgrounds. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

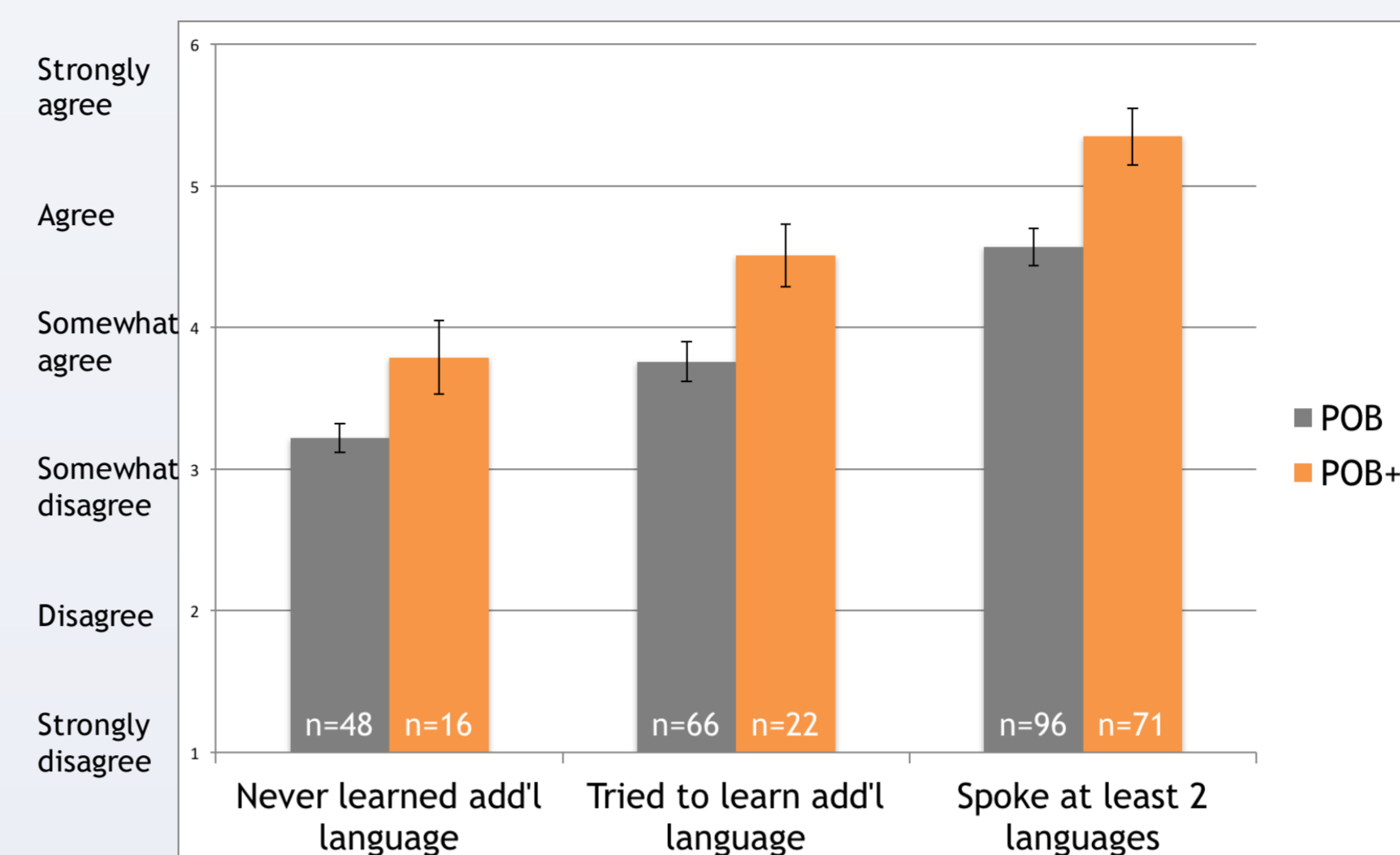
- POB+ score is average of 7 items
- POB+ scores ranged from 1 to 6 ($M=4.9$, $SD=1$)
- $n = 109$
- Cronbach's alpha = .89

RESULTS

- Both scales had strong internal reliability.
- POB and POB+ were strongly positively correlated.
- This relationship was less strong among the 48 parents of toddlers exposed to Spanish & English.



RQ 2: How do perceptions vary by language background?



RESULTS

- Speaking more of an add'l language was associated with higher POB and POB+ scores.
- Contrasts between three groups were significant for both POB and POB+ ($p < .05$).

RQ 3: What is the relationship between language usage and language development?

Preliminary regression analysis (n=47)

| | English Vocabulary | Spanish Vocabulary | Total Conceptual Vocabulary |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Child age (mos) | 2.82 ^{***} (0.54) | 1.27 [*] (0.59) | 3.57 ^{***} (0.95) |
| Parent Education (yrs) | 4.24 ^{**} (1.520) | 4.39 [*] (1.657) | 7.52 ^{**} (2.67) |
| Home Literacy Activities in Span. | 2.084 (1.057) | 2.46 [*] (1.152) | 3.86 [*] (1.86) |
| Spanish Usage | -14.79 ^{***} (3.88) | -1.36 (4.23) | -16.98 [*] (6.81) |
| Constant | -61.28 [*] (30.03) | -79.75 [*] (32.73) | -113.3 [*] (52.72) |
| R ² | 0.59 | 0.28 | 0.46 |
| F | 14.84 | 4.07 | 8.77 |

Note: English and Spanish vocabulary are CDI raw scores; Total Conceptual Vocabulary is sum of raw scores minus translation equivalents

RESULTS

- Expected positive effect of parent education and home literacy (controlling for age and Span. usage).
- POB and POB+ not sig. predictors of add'l variation in vocabulary, but potentially interact with Span. usage.

CONCLUSIONS

- Both Perception of Bilingualism (POB) scales had strong internal reliability, suggesting that items may tap into two related constructs and reflect consistency across the items in the current survey.
- Adults who used more of a non-English language reported more positive perceptions of the value of bilingualism, both for society and for their children.
- Consistent with prior research, parent education and home literacy were key predictors of toddlers' vocabulary, but the influence of Spanish usage and perceptions of bilingualism warrants further examination.

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- U.S. context; parallel versions will be developed for international comparisons
- Small sample; we will continue to collect online data
- Bias towards adults who seek out surveys online; data collection in school districts and lab-based studies will diversify our sample and provide more enriched sociolinguistic information for data interpretation

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