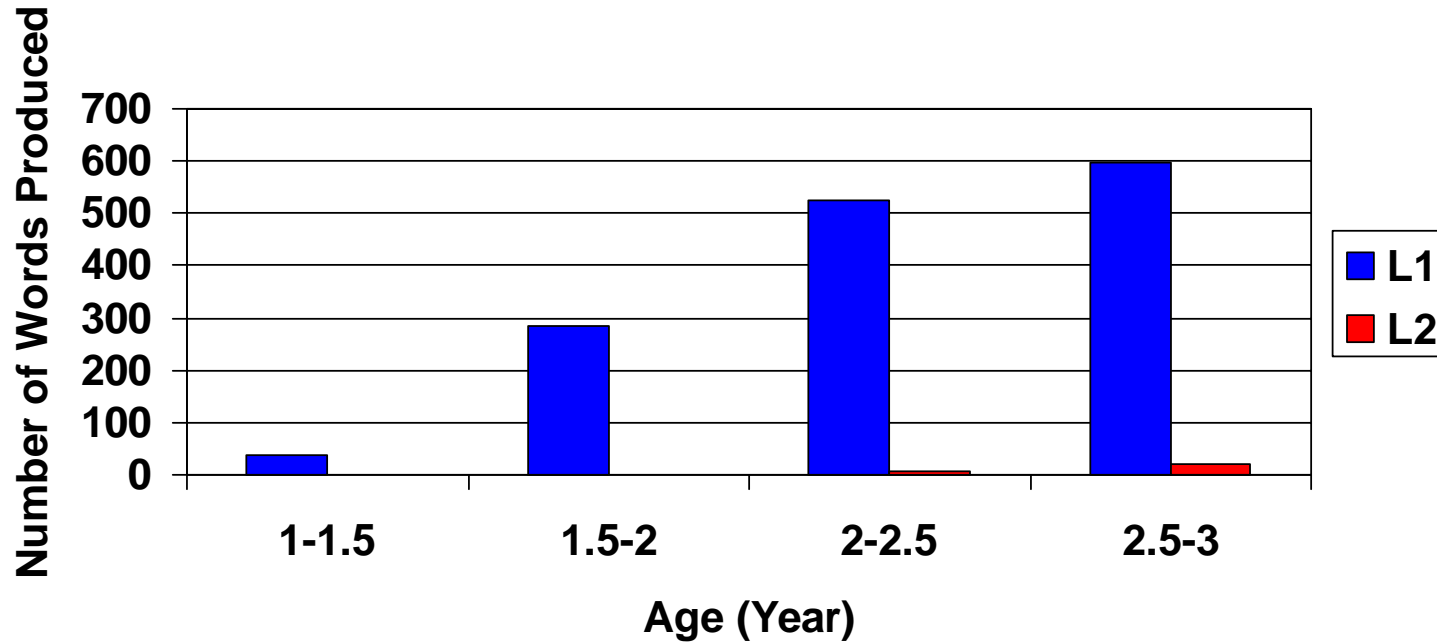


Bilingual Language and Literacy Development among Asian American Children

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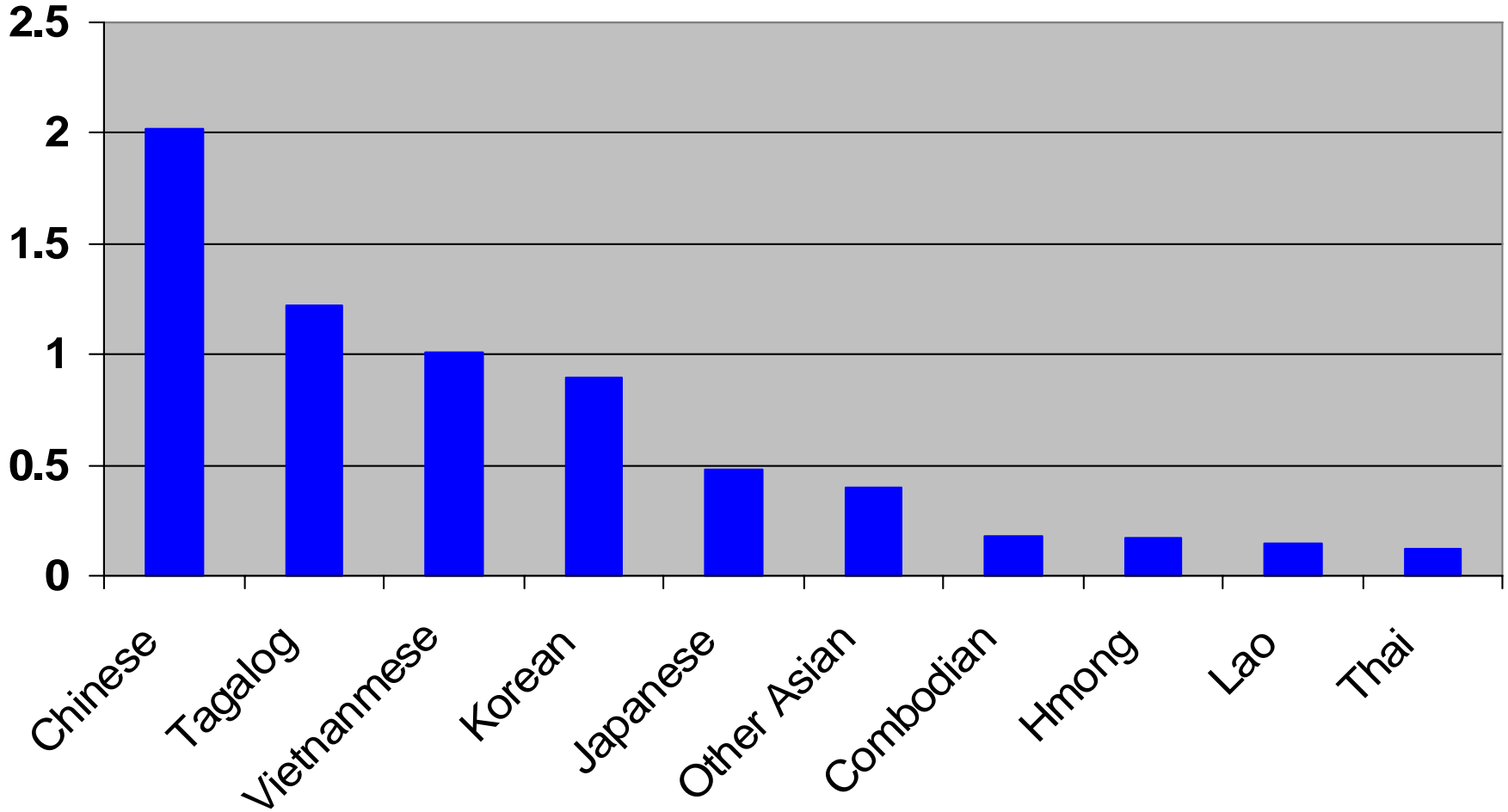
Bilingual Vocabulary Growth (Age 1-3) (Monolinguals & Incipient Bilinguals n=81)





This map is taken from the [Atlas of Canada](#).
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US Population Speaking Asian Languages (in millions)



English Speaking Abilities (2000 US Census)

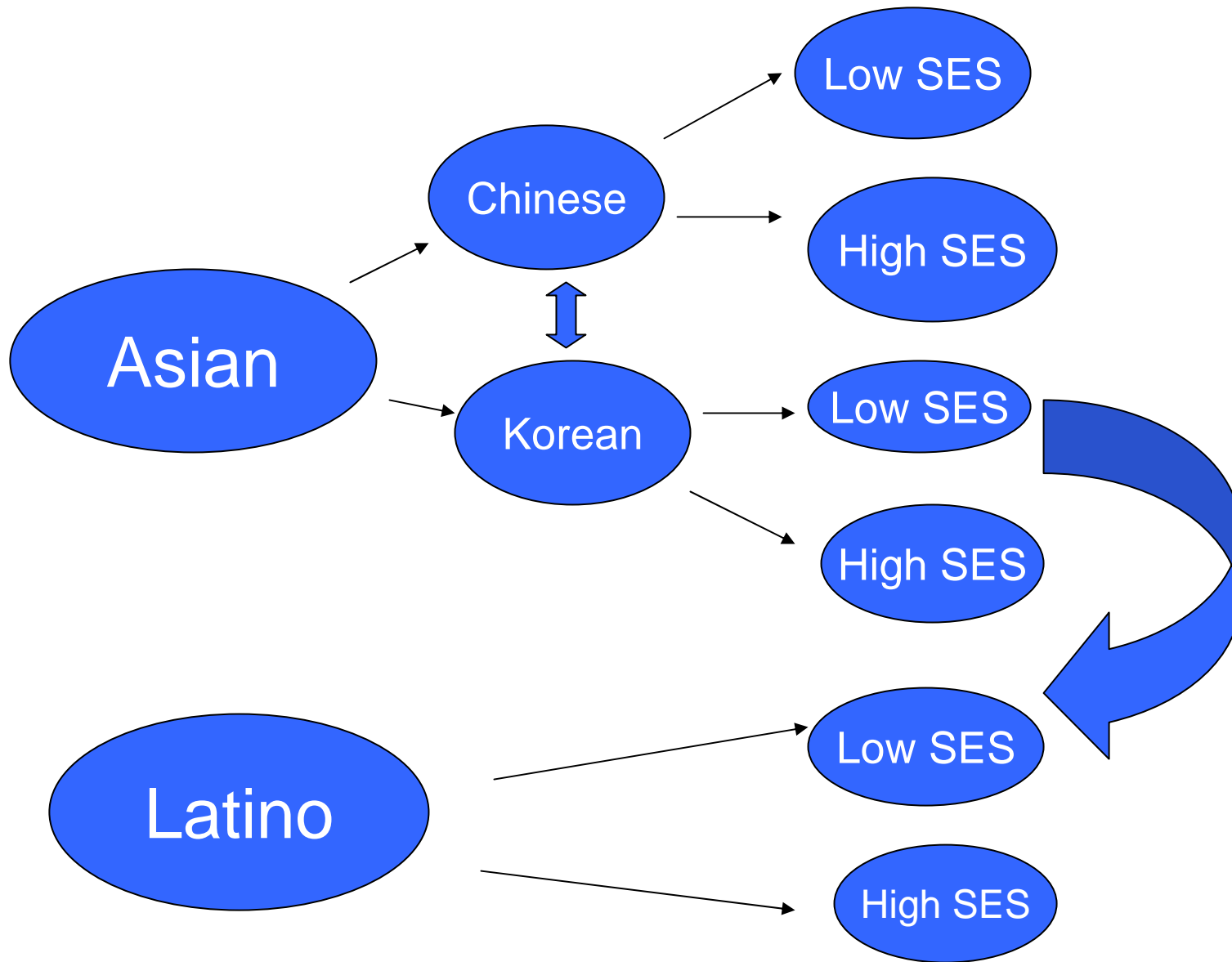
Cannot Speak English + Not Well

Miao /Hmong	39.3%
Cambodian	37.6%
Vietnamese	37.5%
Korean	33.3%
Lao	32.1%
Chinese	31.7%
Japanese	18.9%
Thai	17.3%
Other Asian Languages	8.8%
Tagalog	6.9%

Language	Syllable	Tone	Inflection	Word Order	Writing
Hmong	Mono	Yes	No	SVO	semi-syllabic script
Cambodian/ Khmer	Multiple	No	No	SVO	Syllabic alphabet
Vietnamese	Mono	Yes	Limited	SVO	Alphabet
Korean		No	Moderate	SOV	Syllabic alphabet
Chinese	Mono	Yes	No	SVO	logographic
Japanese	Multiple	No	Moderate	SOV	Syllabic alphabet
Lao		Yes	No	SVO	Syllabic alphabet
Thai	Mono	Yes	No	SVO	Syllabic alphabet

Demographics

- Fast growing
- Recent Immigration Status: 88% of school-age Asian American children have a foreign-born parent
- Widening Achievement Gap: high-achieving students vs. dropouts (Lew, 2006)



Questions (birth -3)

- Who takes care of these children?
- Through which channels and to which degree are these children exposed to their home language, and English?
- How do these children's language abilities develop (in comparison to monolinguals) taking into account their language exposure patterns?
- What accounts for individual differences in language development?

Chinese & Korean Infant/Toddler Study (Jia, Chen & Kim, current)

- **118** infants and toddlers with Chinese or Korean as home language;
86 Chinese; **32** Korean
- Age: **12 – 36 month** (mean =24 month)

Parental Education and Language Abilities

- 65% Mothers had college degree
- 70% Fathers had college degree
- Father & Mother: spoke moderate to fluent English

Who Takes Care of These Children?

- **Home care:** 78%, half by parents; half by grandparents and nannies;
- **Daycare/Nursery:** 22%

Language Use

	L1 Dominant	Balanced	L2 Dominant
Mother (n=118)	95%	5%	0%
Father (n=113)	85%	5%	10%
Grandparents/Nanny (n=56)	98%	2%	0%
Siblings (n=44)	61%	9%	30%
Daycare/Nursery (n=24)	42%	33%	25%
Watching TV (n=81)	41%	16%	43%
Reading (n=46)	52%	24%	24%

Comparison to Monolinguals

Home Language Monolingual Norms Not Available

Compared to English Monolinguals

- **Girls:** 56% above 50% percentile
- **Boys:** 45% above 50% percentile

Marchman, Xuan, & Yoshida (2005)

N= 50

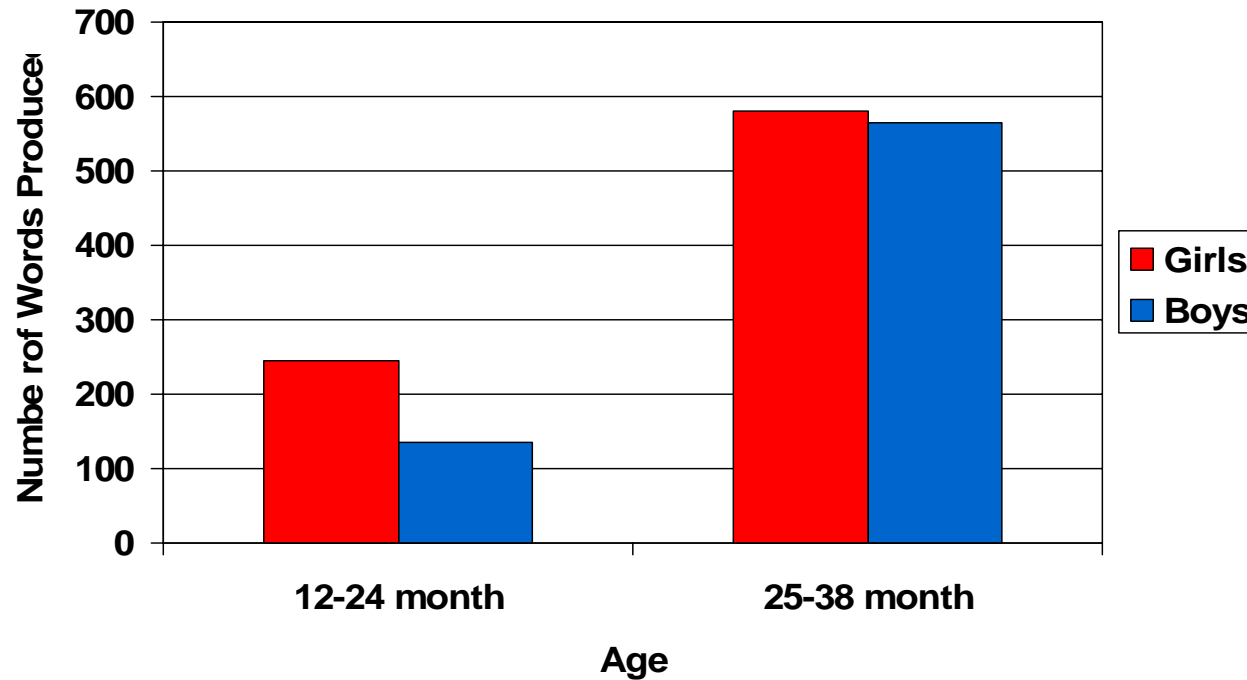
Home language: Mandarin

Age: 18-30 month (living in California)

word production: L1: 372 words;

L2: 74 words;

Gender Differences



Same findings as among Spanish-English bilinguals
Patterson (1998; 2002)

Explanatory Variables

Predictors of language proficiency among Spanish-speaking infants & toddlers

- **Parents' educational levels** (e.g., Hurtado, Marchman & Fernald, 2007)
- Amount of time being read to (e.g., Patterson, 2002)
- Quality of caregiver-child interaction (e.g., Collado, Marchman & Fernald, 2008)

Summary

- If Asian American parents can speak home language fluently, regardless of their English level, they choose to speak to their young children in their home language. Among lower SES families, L1 use would even be more prevalent.
- As a group, infants and toddlers exposed to Asian languages at home **may** develop at the same speed as monolingual children.
- Profiles of linguistic development (e.g., gender differences, vocabulary composition) **may** resemble monolingual speakers.

Implications

- Home language as a major source of information to evaluate progress of language development.
- The need for bilingual professionals – speech language pathologists, teachers, school psychologists, therapists.
- Knowledge and experience in home language and culture play a positive role in children's academic, social and emotional development

Future Research

- Validate home language proficiency measures in bilingual populations (e.g., CDI in Chinese & Korean)
- Large-scale cross-sectional and longitudinal studies to obtain norms for both sequential and simultaneous bilinguals

Future Research

- Individual differences
- More in-depth investigation of factors influencing early language development (e.g., quality of caregiver-child interaction)

Preschool Age

- What kinds of child care or educational settings are these children in? How are decisions made?
- How do their home language and English abilities continue to develop?

Diverse Care Situations (Preschool Age)

- Continue to be under home care in US
- Under care of relatives in their home country
- Enter home language preschools
- Enter English schools
- Enter bilingual preschools

Those Not At Home Nor in School

“I interned at an elementary school in Chinatown, in which most of the students were second generation immigrants coming from Fujian. Most students were sent back to China to be raised by their grandparents as an infant while their parents worked in the US. These children did not return to their parents until they were about five-year old, at an age old enough for school. When they returned to the US, they not only faced the challenge of adjusting to the new language and educational environment, but also the challenge of knowing their new families.

These kindergartners were often anxious and shared a strong sense of insecurity. They believed that they would soon be separated from their parents. This sense of insecurity resulted in the children’s excessive crave for attention. They had impulse control and attention issues, acted out in class, and were distractive to peers. Among the 20 students in a class, 7 of them clearly displayed such social and emotional issues. ”

Jennifer Chen, Bilingual Art Therapist

At Home

- Asian American parents of preschool age children in the US spent more time on teaching children **pre-academic skills**: letters, numbers, shapes, math skills (Parmar, Harkness & Super, 2004).
- Higher educational level parents start to read to their children at **2.5** years; Lower educational level: **4** years (Zhang, Ollila & Harvey, 1998)
- Prefer books of **educational values**

At Home

-- Low SES Parents Try Hard

Li (2001) Case Study

No: books, TV, library, zoo, parks, reading time

“Amy’s parents taught Amy numbers and letters in English whenever they had a moment or two between serving or cooking for customers. .. They used whatever they had in the restaurant to teach her letters – beverage bottles, ice cream cones, snack packages, candies.”

At Home

-- Engage in Emergent Literacy Activities (Hirst, 1998)

UK Children speaking Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati home languages (diverse SES levels)

- Looking at books on their own
- Pretending to read environmental print (e.g., letters, shopping lists, messages)
- Pretending to write

In English Schools

Genishi, Stires, & Yung-Chan (2001),

Hakuta (1978), Huang & Hatch (1978), Yoshida (1978)

Tabor & Snow (2002)

- 1st Stage: **Home language use**
- 2nd Stage: **Nonverbal period** (silent period) - gain comprehension abilities (cued by intonation, gestures, and context); not silent outside school;
- 3rd Stage: **Telegraphic & formulaic language** - learn a core vocabulary; imitate/produce complex sentences & attach global meaning to it;
- 4th Stage: **Productive English use** – productive syntax; expand core vocabulary

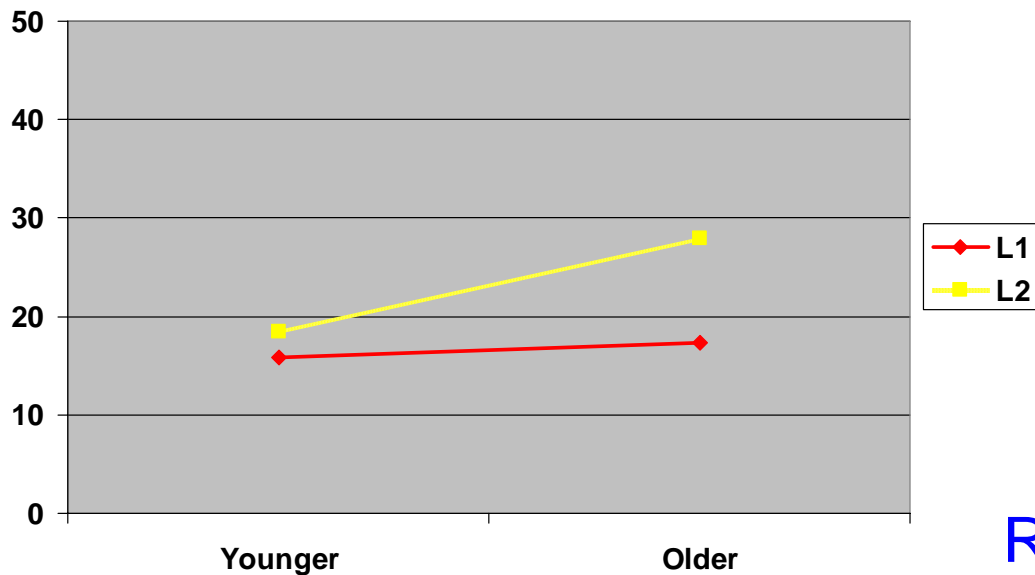
Bilingual Language Development

- Lack of **systematic** research comparing children's language and literacy development in different **care settings** (home vs. school), and in different **school settings** (monolingual English vs. bilingual)
- The few available studies have uncovered the **relative speed** of L1 and L2 oral language proficiency development

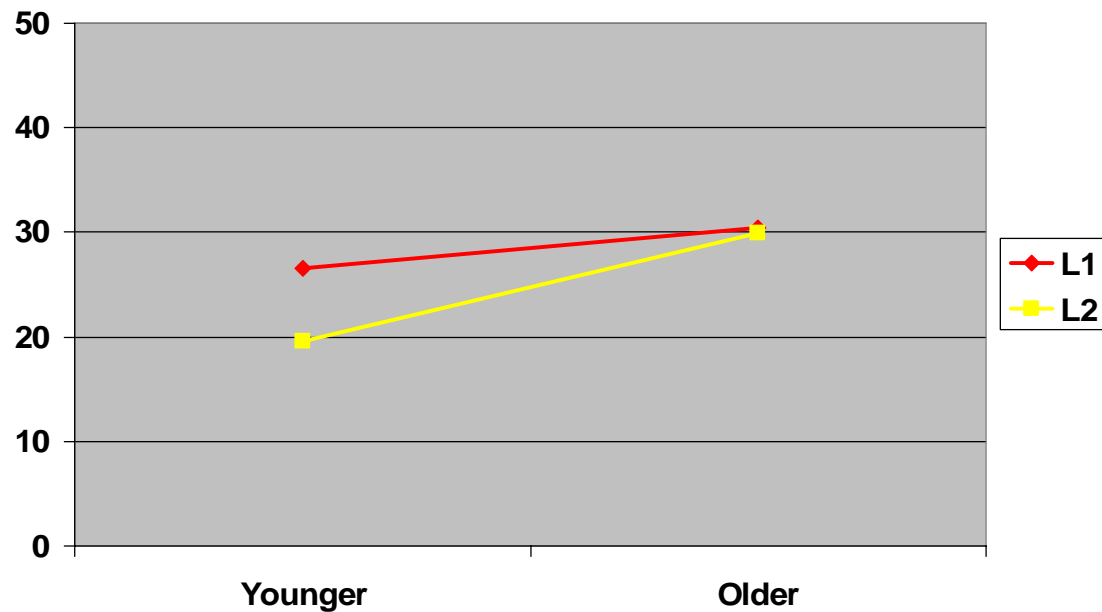
Kan & Kohnert (2005; in press)

- **Hmong-speaking** children in a bilingual preschool (L2: instructions, L1: class management)
- younger: **3 – 4**; older: **4- 5** years

Productive Vocabulary



Receptive Vocabulary



Kan & Kohnert (2005; in press)

- Increasingly larger gap between production and comprehension in L1;
- Can learn new words quickly in their home language

Summary

- During preschool period, Asian language minority children are in diverse care situations. School-based research may **leave many at-risk out of the picture**.
- Parents engage children in preliteracy activities, with a focus on pre-academic skills. Low SES parents do this in ways their conditions allow. Children show emergent literacy skills.
- After going to English preschools, there's **significant growth of L2** skills and more **limited of growth of L1** at the group level.
- Some processes of learning English are **different** from those experienced by child L1 learners (e.g., more advanced cognitive skills; influence of L1).
- Some other processes are **similar** to those experienced by child L1 learners (e.g., linguistic structures challenging to all learners).

Future Research – Sample Focus

- **Systematically** compare children in different preschool programs (e.g., bilingual vs. monolingual), and in different care settings (e.g., home care vs. school)
- Across **SES** ranges
- Across **age** ranges
- Across **languages**

Future Research - Measurement Focus

- **Systematically** examine children's oral language skills in various aspects (phonology, lexicon, syntax, narrative skills)
- **Systematically** examine children's literacy skills in both languages
- **Relation** between oral and literacy skills

Major Challenge – Assessment Tools

- Measures - lack of **validated and standardized** measures tailors to bilinguals

After Preschool

- During the lower elementary grades, L1 and L2 linguistic structures **influence each other** in oral language development (Shin, 2005).
- Aspects of reading and writing **skills are transferable** across L1 and L2 (Wang, Chen & Cheng, 2006; Ruan, 2003).
- **English dominance**, more **variability** in home language (Jia, Chen, Chan, Jeung, 2008)
- **College students** with Asian home language backgrounds have **limited home language literacy skills**; less than Spanish-English bilingual students (Jia, 2008).
- **Strong** English skills associated with **low** or **high** home language skills (Jia et al., 2008)

