Harmonious Bilingualism in Singapore

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Outline

- Harmonious Bilingual Experience: Key Components and Research

- The Singaporean Bilingual Experience: Mother Tongue is Key

- The Effects of Paper Book and e-Book Reading on Harmonious Bilingual Experience

Harmonious Bilingual Development: The Concept

"Harmonious Bilingual Development applies when families with **young children** in a **language contact setting do not** generally **experience any problems** because of that bilingual situation or have a **positive subjective experience** with bilingualism."

(De Houwer, 2020, p.63)

Subjective well-being is a **multidimensional** concept, and it can be generally defined in terms of "the experience of pleasant affect, unpleasant affect, and life satisfaction".
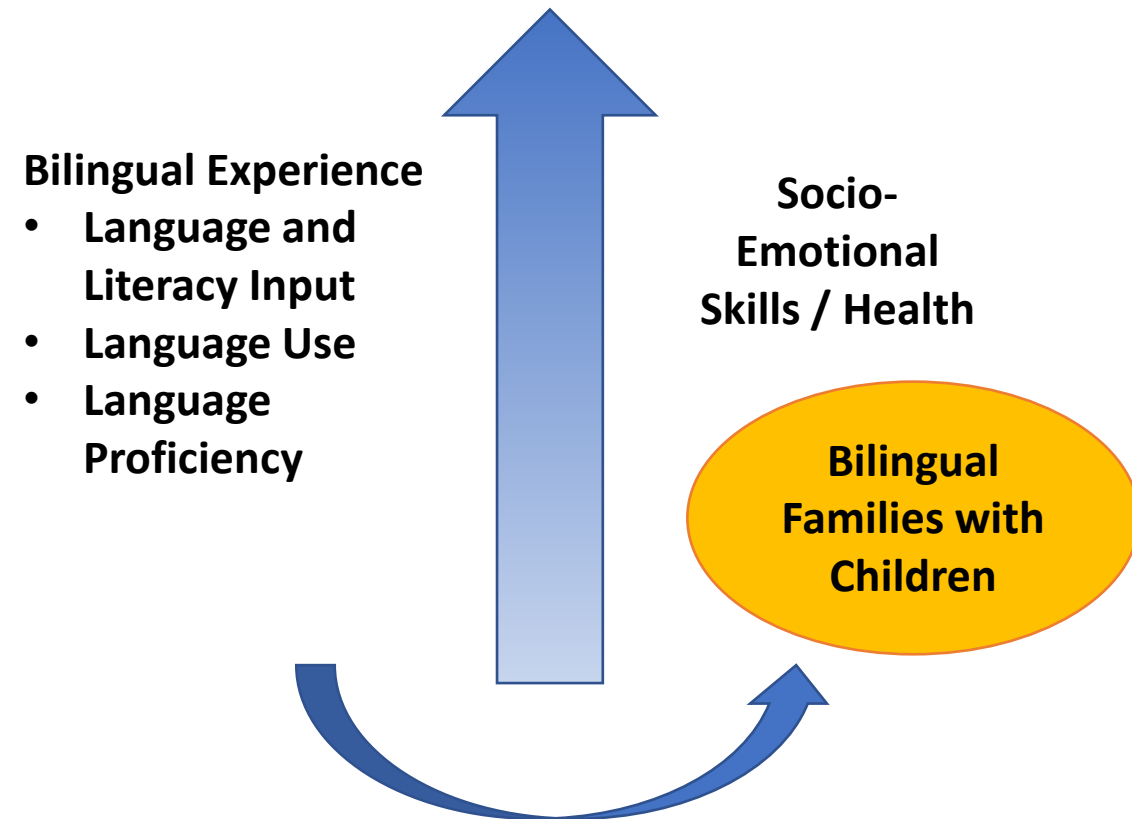
(Tov, 2018, p.3)

Harmonious Bilingual Development
(De Houwer, 2020)

Harmonious (Positive Subjective Experience)

Bilingual Families with Young Children

Frustrated / Conflictive (Negative Experience)
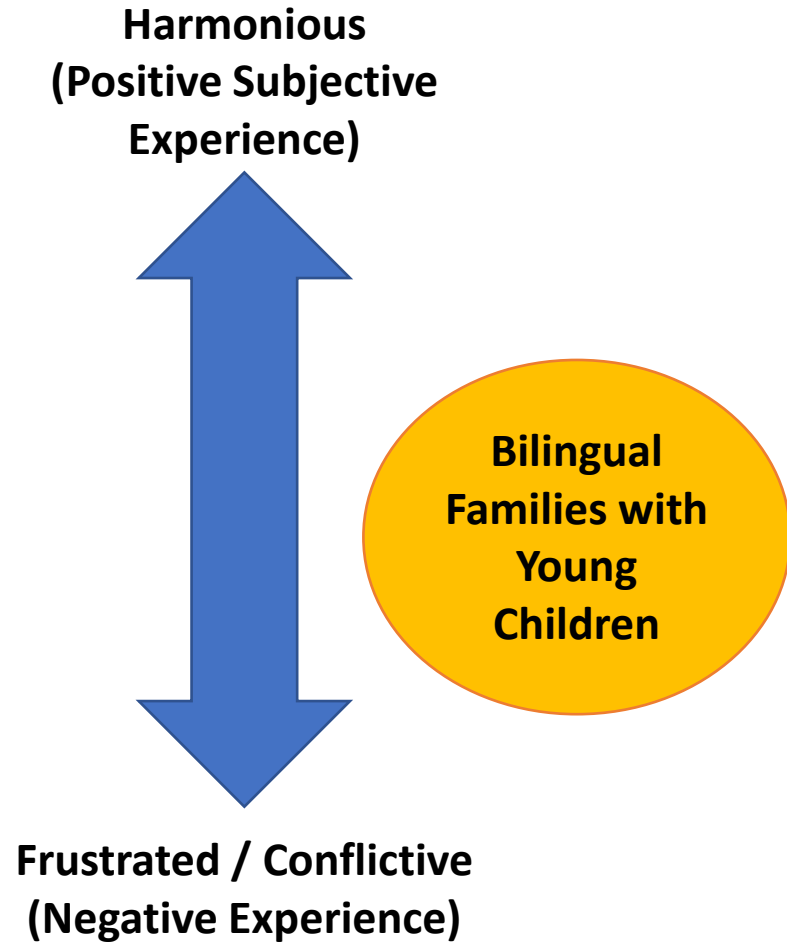
Harmonious Bilingual Experience (HBE)
(Sun et al., 2021)

Bilingual Experience
- **Language and Literacy Input**
- **Language Use**
- **Language Proficiency**

Socio-Emotional Skills / Health

Bilingual Families with Children

HBE: Language and Literacy Input

Children's Books are a source of rich socio-emotional knowledge!

- a reference to a social interaction or an emotion every three sentences.

- Plots and narratives centered around interactions between people or anthropomorphic animals.

Reading lets children understand societal norms and values and helps them grasp relevant language skills that they can use to express these norms and behaviors.

Shared book reading can improve children's' social skills, helping them practice skills such as turn taking and self expression.

Language and culture are closely intertwined and can impart different socio-emotional values (e.g., collective vs individual), bilingualism can expose children to additional viewpoints, perspectives, and facets of culture.

(Aram & Aviram, 2009, Dyer et al., 2000; Luo et al., 2013; Sun, 2019)

HBE: Language Output

The functions of language output (Swain, 1995)

- Noticing/Trigger: Helps language learners observe and recognize problems in their language use

- Hypothesis-testing: Helps language learners experiment with different language hypotheses.

- Metalinguistic reflection: Helps language learners reflect, control, and internalize language skills.

"People Observation Skills": Conversing with others helps children acquire social skills.

Bilingual language use can provide more opportunities and contexts for people observation.

(Sun, 2019, 2022; Sun et al., 2022)

HBE: Language Proficiency

School
(Societal Language)

- Teacher-Student Relationships

- Peer Relationships

- Problem Behaviors

(The little girl went to a French school in Algeria, yet spoke Arabic, teacher-student relationship; Dahoun, 1995; Sun et al., 2015)

Home
(Mother Tongue)

- Parent-Child Relationships

- Elder Relationships

- Family Cohesion

(Father was born in Ethiopia, migrated to America, father-son relationship; De Houwer, 2020; RA sharing)

Bilingual Experience and Child Socio-emotional Well-Being (Han, 2010)

The ECLS-K Project: Longitudinal study following children from 800 public and 200 private schools in the fall of 1998.

This research project involved **14,853** Latin-American and Non-Hispanic White children.

Socio-Emotional Well-Being （Preschool- every fall and spring term；Primary school- Spring term of the 1st, 3rd, and 5th grades.):

Teachers utilized the Social Rating Scale (Gresham & Elliott, 1990) :

- **Social Competence** (Approaches to Learning, Interpersonal Skills, Self-Control)
- **Problem Behaviors** (Internalizing and Externalizing problem behaviors)

Family language use and English academic achievement

- Frequency of Mother Tongue use between Parents and Child (Never, Occasionally, Often, Always)
- English grades of children in kindergarten and school.

Harmonious Bilingual Development in Singapore

SKIP Project: 805 K1 Children aged 4-5 （Mandarin = 551, Malay = 105, Tamil = 149）

Socio-emotional Well-being

Teachers utilized the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997): (1) emotional symptoms, (2) conduct problems, (3) hyperactivity or inattention, (4) peer-relationship problems, and (5) prosocial behavior.

Family language use and Bilingual Vocabulary skills

- Frequency of English use between Family Adults and Children

- Age of onset of English and Mother Tongue use.

- Child English and Mother Tongue Receptive Vocabulary skills

(Sun et al., 2021)

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Bilingual Vocabulary

English and Mother Tongue Vocabulary => Children's total difficulty score, suggests a connection between receptive semantic competence and socio-emotional regulation (Toppelberg et al., 2006).

English(societal language) vocabulary => Child social interaction (e.g., expressing points of view) and academic performance (Collins et al., 2011)=> prosocial behaviour

Bilingual Language Use

Years of bilingual language use => prosocial behavior

People's knowledge, thinking approach and means of actions are cultivated by these social interactions, and language output originates in or serves the purpose of such interaction (Min, 2006).

	Prosocial skills				Difficulty level			
Fixed effects								
	Estimate	SE	t		Estimate	SE	t	
(Intercept)	4.26	0.61	6.98		13.73	1.63	8.43	
Gender	0.78	0.12	6.50	***	-1.70	0.33	-5.16	***
NAFF	0.04	0.02	2.17	*	-0.04	0.06	-0.80	
NonInte	0.01	0.01	0.64		-0.05	0.04	-1.42	
Income	0.00	0.01	0.25		-0.04	0.04	-1.12	
EduMot	-0.03	0.04	-0.85		0.00	0.10	0.05	
MT.Mandarin	-0.02	0.22	-0.10		-0.83	0.58	-1.42	
MT.Tamil	-0.04	0.27	-0.14		-0.65	0.73	-0.89	
EngVoc	0.03	0.01	3.67	***	-0.07	0.03	-2.66	**
MTVoc	0.01	0.01	1.06		-0.05	0.02	-2.09	*
BilingInput	0.04	0.08	0.46		0.01	0.22	0.06	
BilingOutput	0.01	0.00	2.20	*	-0.02	0.01	-1.19	
EngBook	-0.03	0.05	-0.67		0.20	0.13	1.55	
Random effects								
Names	Variance	SD			Variance	SD		
Teacher	5.51	2.35			30.08	5.48		
MT/EngVoc	0.00	0.04			0.01	0.11		
Residual	2.02	1.42			15.51	3.94		
Number : 659, Tea: 87					Number: 659, Tea: 87			

(Sun et al., 2021)

Creating a Harmonious Bilingual Experience
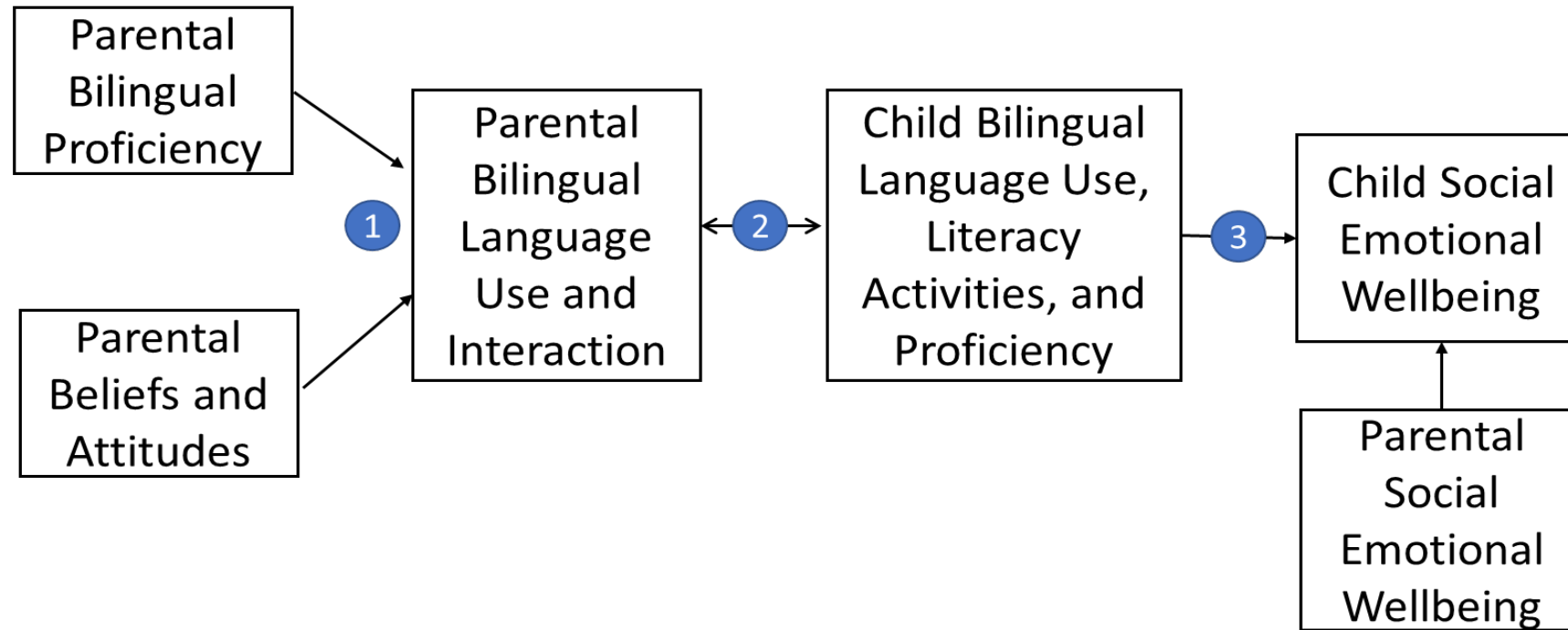
Parental Proficiency is key!

Higher parental proficiency is associated with increased home language and literacy involvement. (Baker, 2014; Sun et al., 2022).

Speech of native speaker / highly proficient parents is more beneficial to children's **lexical and grammatical development** (Paradis, 2011; Place & Hoff, 2016).

Parents harbor a wide variety of **beliefs, and perception towards bilingualism**, which in turn affect their bilingual language use and interaction (De Houwer, 1999; Surrain, 2011).

- **Languages**: "I want my child to speak Japanese, because it'll let her communicate with my parents in Japan."

- **Bilingualism:** "It is important for my child to speak both English and Malay, because we live in a multicultural society."

- **Impact:** "My child will eventually pick up whatever language she wants, regardless of what I do"

The Harmonious Bilingual Experience Framework

(Sun, 2023)