

**RUMACC**

**Raising Children in More than One Language**



Enhancing the language  
experience in the community  
and at school

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# Bilingual education myths

Bilingualism is the source of underachievement in school!

**FALSE**

Bilingual children speak later than monolingual children!

**FALSE**

Majority language acquisition is impaired by bilingualism!

**FALSE**

Bilingual children are more intelligent than monolinguals!

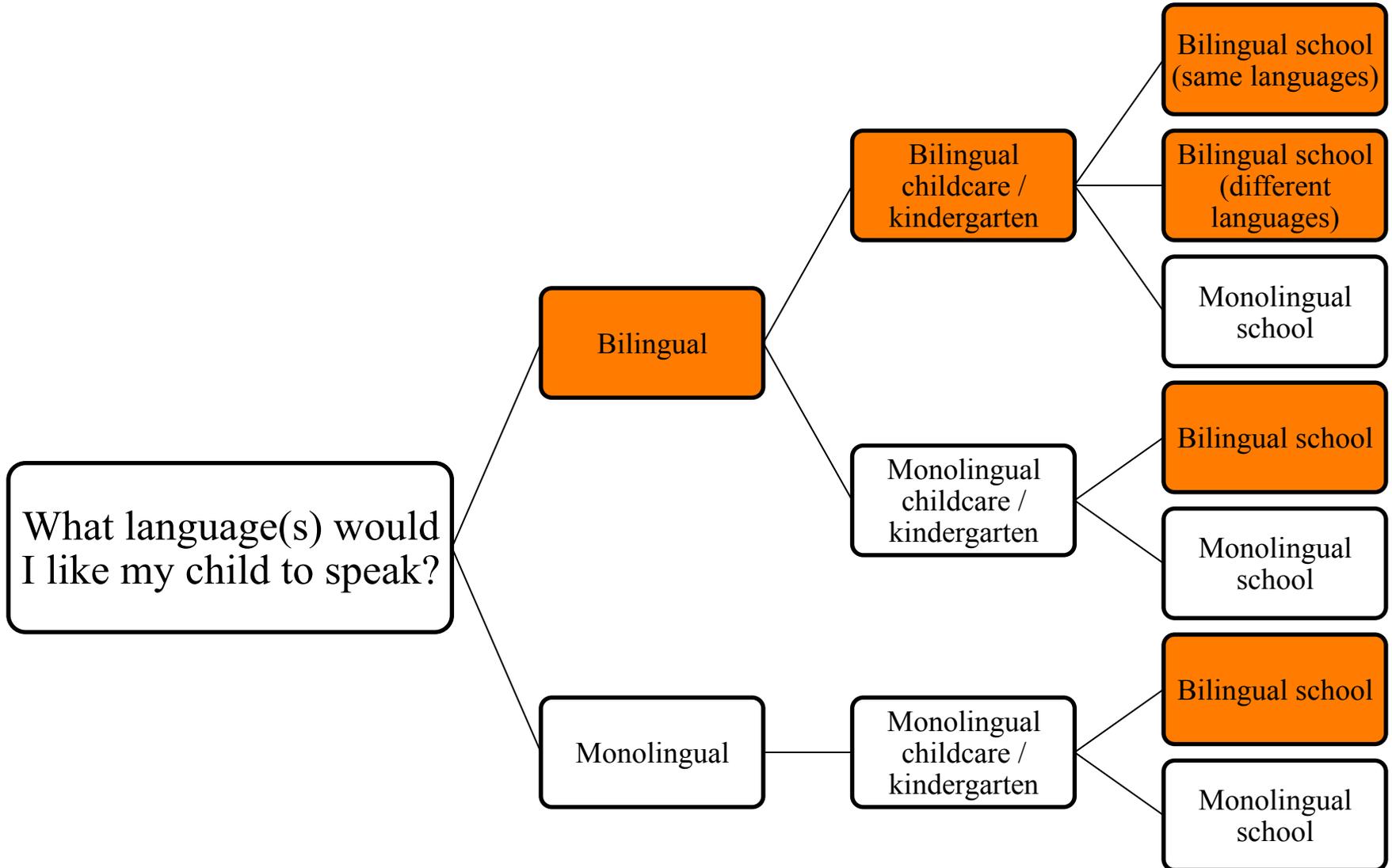
**FALSE**





# “We are our choices.”

(Jean-Paul Sartre)



# Language development 0-5yrs

- Parents primary source of language (e.g. vocabulary, pronunciation)
- Language development continues throughout our entire life span

*Babies babble,  
Children prattle,  
Adults create Haiku*



- Early language appears at more-or-less the same age and in a similar way, regardless of the cultural, linguistic and social setting



# Bilingual playgroup

- The natural step from a parents' group. Typically for 0-3 year olds
- Bilingual impact:
  - Community building
  - Creation of friendships in the minority language
  - Cultural and linguistic features of play in the minority language
- Two options:
  - Find an existing playgroup in your specific language
  - Start your own playgroup

<http://www.playgroup.org.au/Start-a-playgroup/How-to-start-a-playgroup.aspx>



# Bilingual childcare / kindergarten

- Has clear separation of language use (e.g. one educator – one language)
- Provides a safe, warm environment
- Provides quality interactions that are in tune with the developmental stages of the child
- Bilingual impact depends on friends, no. days attending, favourite educator etc.
- Benefit of low levels of pressure, ‘fun’ element and routines



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*“Keine Angst vor der Sprache aufbauen.”*

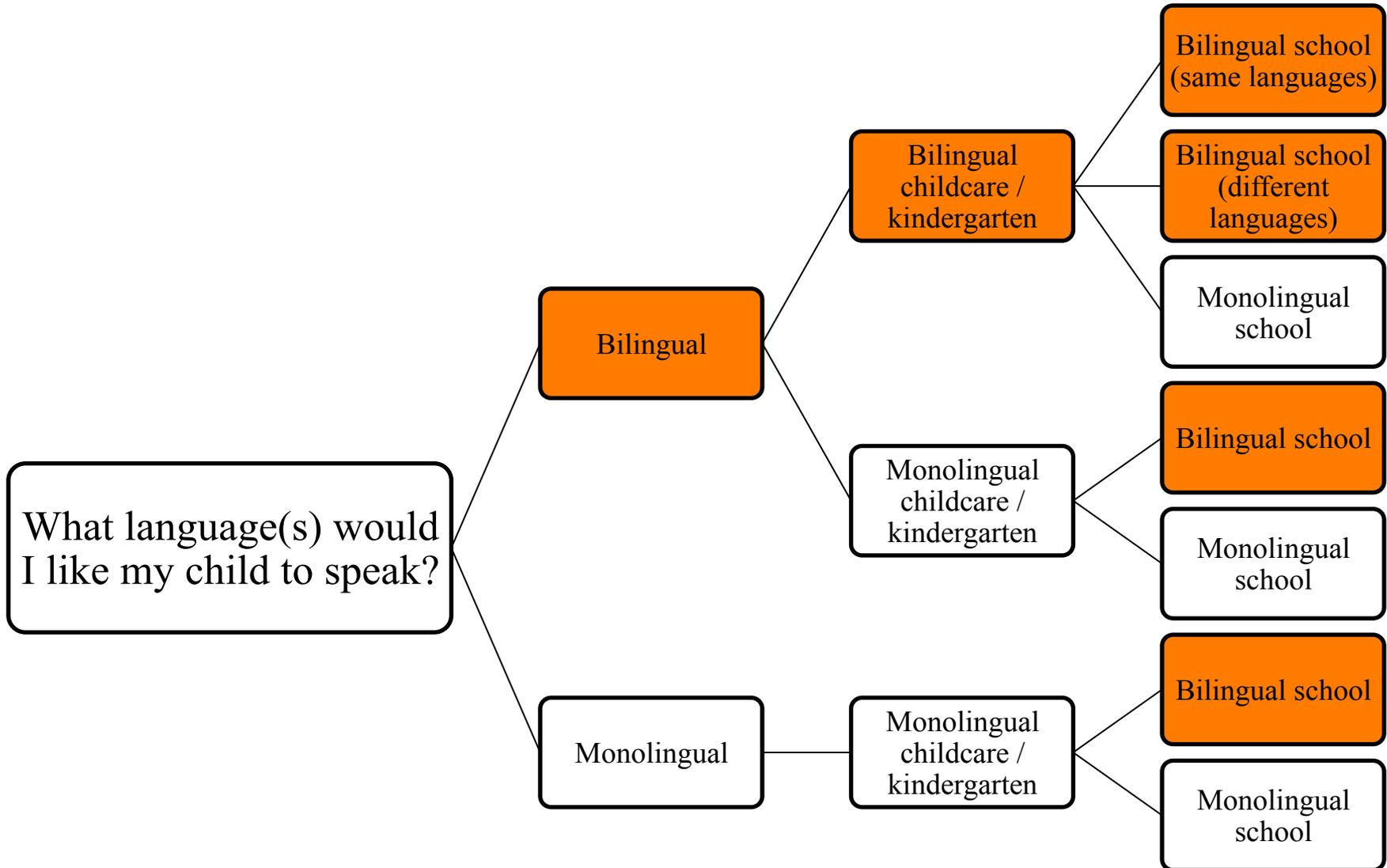
(2-3 year old room educator)





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# Ready for school (5 year olds)

- Active vocabulary of 500-1000 words  
Passive vocabulary of 8000+ words
- Most of grammatical forms of language (e.g. questions, negative statements, dependent clauses, compound sentences)
- Can talk about objects / events outside immediate context
- Can vary language according to situation (e.g. baby talk to babies, polite language to grandparents)
- Start of emergent literacy and metalinguistic awareness (ESPECIALLY bilingual children).



# Language learning at school

- 3000 words / year added throughout schooling
- Central importance of **peers and teachers** in language development
- Attainment of literacy:
  - Removes focus from here and now
  - Increases individualization of language use
  - Promotes understanding of register/dialect
  - Provides exposure to complex grammatical structures
  - Opens child to a range of world views
- Increased awareness of rule-governed nature of language, e.g. *Where did the King hide his armies? – In his sleeve!*
- Development of extended discourse and de-contextualised language



# A possible bilingual advantage

- Bilingual children generally more able to look at language from a distance, which prepares them better for learning to read and write:
  - Differences in writing systems (left to right, top to bottom)
  - Arbitrary nature of sound – object relations (e.g. ‘Tisch’, ‘table’, ‘Table’, ...)
  - Arbitrary nature of word – object relations (e.g. ‘*raupe*’ and ‘caterpillar’)



# Monolingual education for bilinguals

- Language of classroom= majority language (e.g. English)
- Assimilation of minority language speakers, resulting in loss of minority language (regardless of how well spoken)
- Minority language as a foreign language may be detrimental for children who already speak the language fluently.
- Risk of stagnation of minority language development for children who are already bilingual.

Think bilingual: A second-rate education is to graduate from high school speaking only one language

Children likely to need extra-curricular language support to remain bilingual

# Saturday Schools

Ultimately, I think that Saturday language schools offer fantastic opportunities for many families, especially those who do not speak a minority language at home. They provide consistent exposure to the language, albeit minimal. Yet, there are also many reasons why such a school would not work for many families. The worst possible scenario is if Saturday language school causes a child to resent the language since he or she is stuck in a classroom on Saturday while other kids are out having fun. Ultimately, each family will have to decide on their own based on the quality of the school, their children's personalities and whether or not they are willing to dedicate part of their weekend to a language school.

<http://www.multilingualliving.com/2010/05/15/saturday-language-schools-really-beneficial/>



# What would you do?

*What other activities  
can you think of to  
promote bilingualism  
if your child attends a  
non-immersion  
mainstream school?*

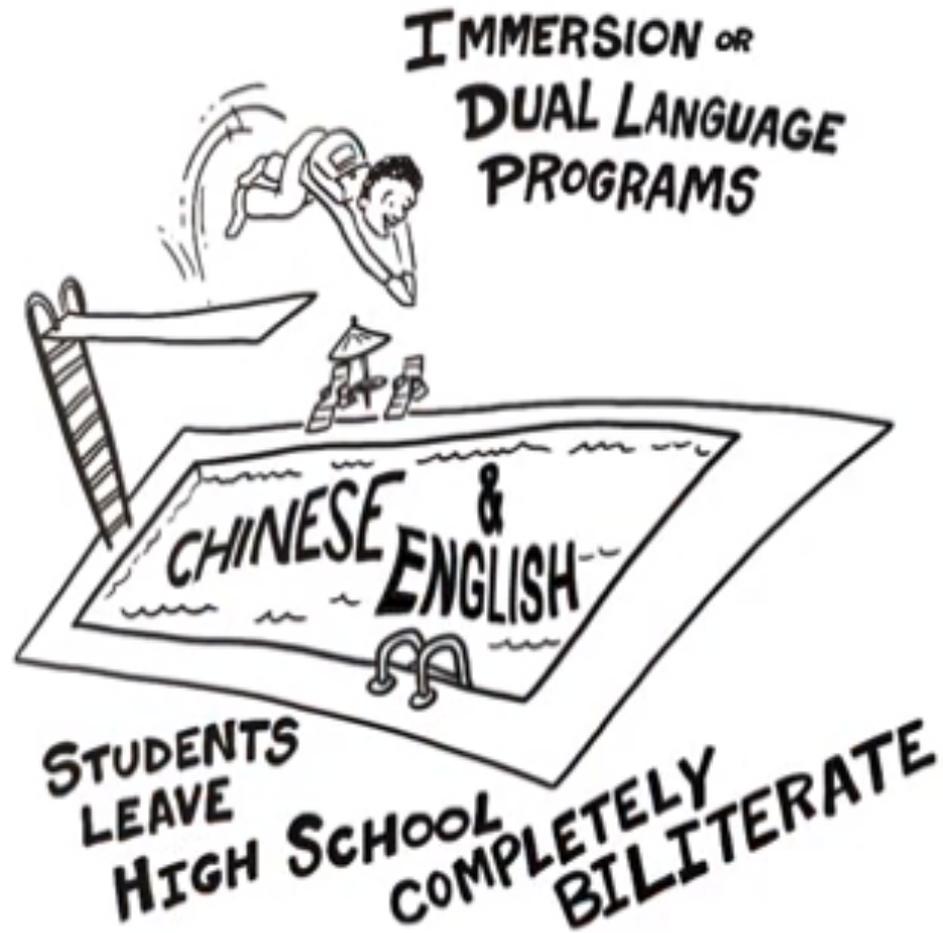




# Weighing up options



# Immersion schooling for all children





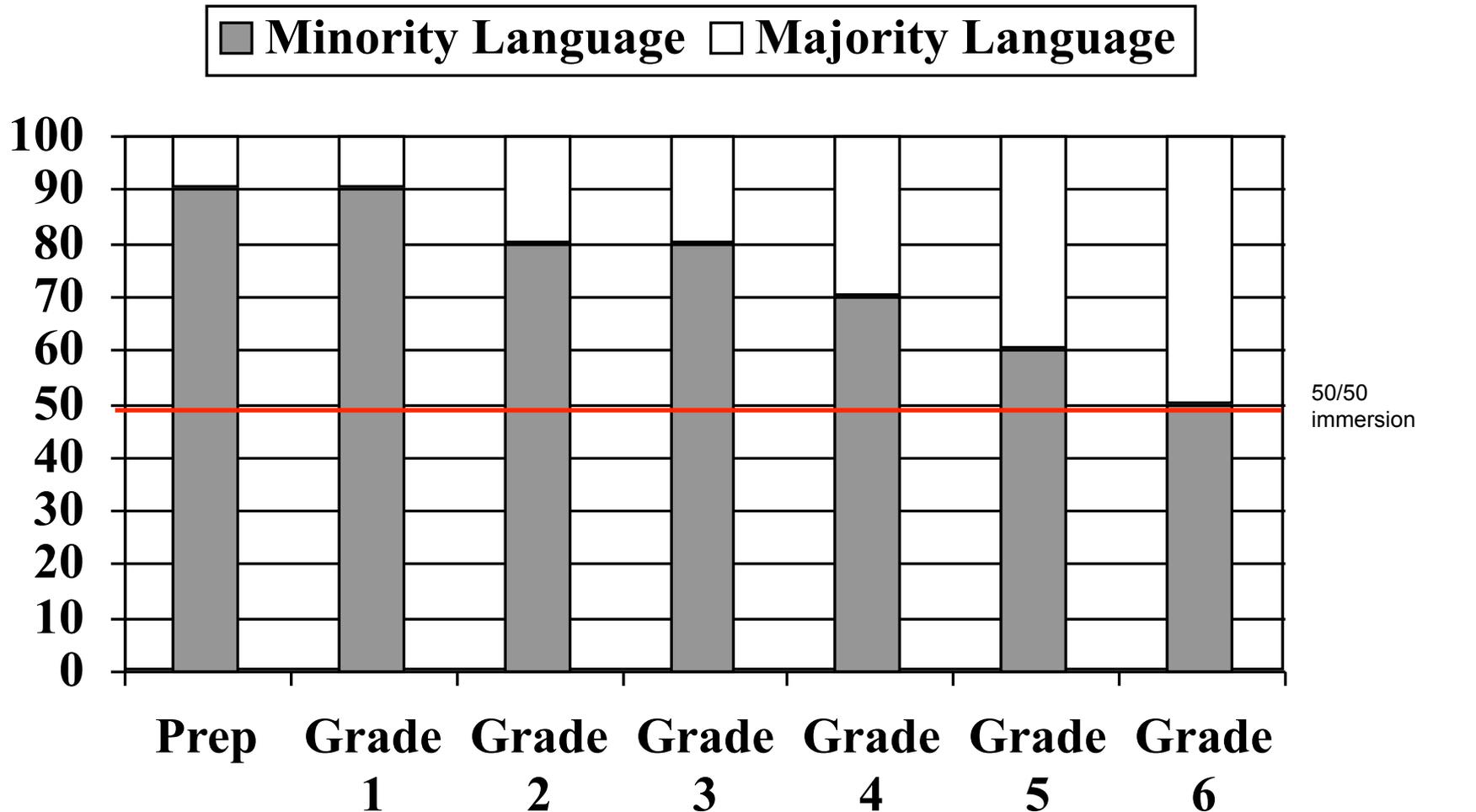
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# Find it or found it?



Deutsche Schule Melbourne

# Two-way early immersion (e.g. DSM)



(Lindholm-Leary & Howard, 2008; Genesee, 2008)

# It's personal ...

- **Subjective values**  
(e.g. importance of cognitive, social, cultural benefits)
- **Subjective situations**  
(e.g. heritage, one parent-one language, 'mother'/'father' tongue, animosity, place of residence)
- **Subjective goals**  
(e.g. balanced bilingual, 'kitchen' language, repatriation, university, ...)



# Conclusion

- Language acquisition is a life-long process
- Schooling has a very large impact on language development of BOTH monolingual and bilingual children
- You need to make sometimes complex decisions concerning the weighting of languages and schooling, esp. the minority language.
- A firm information base is needed but the decisions you make concerning bilingualism is an inherently subjective/personal decision (i.e. no right or wrong).

