



**Supporting the Home Language
and
Promoting English Acquisition within Migrant and Seasonal Head Start**
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SUMMARY OF TECHNICAL PAPER

This document was developed to respond to the strengths and needs of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs nationwide. According to data obtained from the 2000 Program Information Report, **92%** of the children in migrant and seasonal Head Start programs and **23%** enrolled in regional Head Start programs speak a language other than English in the home. Most of these children will be expected to know English. For years, Head Start Program Performance Standards have required programs to support the home language and culture of children. Now, the 1998 Head Start Act requires programs to document progress towards English acquisition for those children who do not speak English. The intent of the paper was to: 1) Summarize the relevant research around first and second language development; 2) Provide guidance on creating language rich environments in both English and Spanish; and 3) Provide suggestions

observed, which is part of the normal process. Additional factors that influence bilingual development are determined by the degree of exposure to the second language, motivation, teaching practices, and individual personalities.

During the process of **sequential bilingualism**, children acquiring a second language after the age of three, before completing basic acquisition of their first language, may experience a period when they speak neither language very well. The learning rate of the second language also depends on the child's need and opportunity to use the language to communicate.

A research-based, four-stage developmental sequence for second language acquisition for children learning the language after the age of three is also described. During the first stage, **home language use** is observed. The second phase addresses the **non-verbal period** of communication. The third stage illustrates the use of **telegraphic or formulaic speech**; and in the final phase, a **productive level of language use** is demonstrated. Children who acquire a second language after three years of age have learned a great deal in their first language. The knowledge gained and the concepts learned in the first language are transferred to the second language and do not have to be re-learned in the second language.

CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

The link of language and culture is also addressed

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