



Ciencia Latina Revista Científica Multidisciplinar, Ciudad de México, México.  
ISSN 2707-2207 / ISSN 2707-2215 (en línea), marzo-abril 2026,  
Volumen 10, Número 2.

[https://doi.org/10.37811/cl\\_rcm.v10i2](https://doi.org/10.37811/cl_rcm.v10i2)

**BILINGUALISM IN IMMIGRANT PARENTING:  
BETWEEN CHILDREN'S SOCIETAL  
LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND HOME  
LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE**

**BILINGÜISMO EN LA CRIANZA INMIGRANTE: ENTRE LA  
COMPETENCIA DE LOS NIÑOS EN LA LENGUA DOMINANTE  
Y EL MANTENIMIENTO DE LA LENGUA FAMILIAR**

**Saida Milena González González**  
Universidad El Bosque, Colombia

## Bilingualism in Immigrant Parenting: Between Children's Societal Language Proficiency and Home Language Maintenance

Saida Milena González González<sup>1</sup>

[smigonzalez@unbosque.edu.co](mailto:smigonzalez@unbosque.edu.co)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3701-0120>

Universidad El Bosque

Colombia

### ABSTRACT

This literature review examines the dynamics of bilingualism in immigrant families with a focus on the interplay between children's proficiency in the societal language and the maintenance of the home language. It synthesizes research on language ideologies, family language policies, and cultural identity to illuminate in this way challenges and strategies for balancing linguistic integration with cultural preservation. Findings highlight the impact of parental commitment, societal ideologies, historical legacies, and institutional practices. On the path to successful bilingualism, responsibility does not fall solely on parents. A review of the literature shows that government policies, society, and academia carry as much weight as parents themselves. Gaps remain in connecting macro-level critiques of linguistic hegemony with micro-level family practices, suggesting avenues for future longitudinal and comparative studies. The present review seeks to help other researchers and academics on their own exploration of this subject by establishing a theoretical baseline based on sound research.

**Keywords:** bilingualism, heritage language, immigrant families, language policy, parental practices

---

<sup>1</sup> Autor principal

Correspondencia: [smigonzalez@unbosque.edu.co](mailto:smigonzalez@unbosque.edu.co)

# **Bilingüismo en la Crianza Inmigrante: Entre la Competencia de los Niños en la Lengua Dominante y el Mantenimiento de la Lengua Familiar**

## **RESUMEN**

Esta revisión de la literatura examina la dinámica del bilingüismo en familias inmigrantes con un enfoque en la interacción entre el dominio de los niños en el lenguaje social y el mantenimiento del idioma materno. Sintetiza la investigación sobre ideologías lingüísticas, políticas lingüísticas familiares e identidad cultural para iluminar de esta manera los desafíos y estrategias para equilibrar la integración lingüística con la preservación cultural. Los hallazgos resaltan el impacto del compromiso de los padres, las ideologías sociales, los legados históricos y las prácticas institucionales. En el camino hacia el bilingüismo exitoso, la responsabilidad no recae únicamente en los padres. Una revisión de la literatura muestra que las políticas gubernamentales, la sociedad y la academia tienen tanto peso como los propios padres. Persisten brechas en la conexión de las críticas a nivel macro de la hegemonía lingüística con las prácticas familiares a nivel micro, lo que sugiere vías para futuros estudios longitudinales y comparativos. La presente revisión busca ayudar a otros investigadores y académicos en su propia exploración de este tema estableciendo una línea de base teórica basada en una investigación sólida.

**Palabras clave:** bilingüismo, lengua de herencia, familias inmigrantes, política lingüística, prácticas parentales

*Artículo recibido 28 febrero 2026  
Aceptado para publicación: 28 marzo 2026*



## INTRODUCTION

Recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2022) confirm the country is experiencing a significant increase in linguistic and cultural diversity. According to the Selected Population Profile, by 2022 over 63.5 million Hispanic or Latino individuals were living in the U.S. According to Wiley and García (2016) note, the status of non-English languages in the United States often mirrors global migration trends. Additionally, since the 1980s, increased immigration from Spanish-speaking countries has made Spanish one of the five most spoken languages in the nation.

Despite these demographic shifts, Spanish-speaking immigrant families face significant challenges in maintaining their linguistic and cultural heritage at home, while simultaneously supporting their children's success in an English-dominant society. The prevailing ideology in the United States elevates English as the superior language, often fostering negative attitudes toward bilingualism (Valdés et al., 2003). This ideological bias makes it difficult for families to preserve their home language. Additionally, Spanish is devalued due to socio-educational disparities: only 6.8% of Hispanics/Latinos in the U.S. hold a graduate or advanced degree, compared to 15.5% of non-Hispanic whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). These disparities contribute to the perception of Spanish as inferior to other global languages.

Furthermore, parents play a vital role in fostering active bilingualism in their children. As De Houwer (2007) emphasizes, parental language input significantly influences children's bilingual development. If both parents predominantly use the majority language (L2), children are likely to experience a decline in their use of the home language (L1).

Early bilingual development is shaped by parental language choices, migration context, and a strong commitment to heritage language transmission (Fillmore, 2000). Complicating these dynamics, U.S. language policies have historically marginalized non-English languages, using language as a tool for assimilation and control (Wiley & García, 2016).

Immigrant parents often face a painful decision: preserve their native language or focus solely on English to facilitate social and academic integration. As Baker (2014) notes, abandoning one's native language can equate to losing one's identity and cultural legacy.



Conversely, maintaining the heritage language allows families to preserve their values, beliefs, and traditions. Teaching children in their native language is an act of cultural transmission—an inheritance of identity and history. Ultimately, the success of childhood bilingualism depends not only on educational policies or parental intent but also on thoughtful planning, cultural awareness, and sustained familial commitment.

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the complex dynamics of bilingualism in immigrant families in countries where a language different from the home language is spoken, with a focus on the interplay between children's proficiency in the societal language and the maintenance of the home language. It seeks to explore how demographics trends, ideological and policy context, socio-educational disparities, and parental language practices influence bilingual development and heritage language transmission. By synthesizing research on language ideologies, family language policies, and cultural identity, the review aims to illuminate the challenges and strategies immigrant parents face in balancing linguistic integration with cultural preservation, ultimately identifying factors that promote successful bilingualism in immigrant households.

It is highly important conducting a literature review on Bilingualism in immigrant parenting then, parents and teachers must act in the right direction to the path of achieving a real bilingualism. This review may contribute to addressing the issues of concern academia regarding the optimal balance between L1 and L2.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology includes the revision of research documents from the last 47 years. To find and choose the authors involved, I used a bibliographic Matrix (Table 1) which included: Author's Name (in APA 7 format), Theoretical Framework, Methodology, Key Findings, Relevance to Substractive Bilingualism, Country, Poblacion, and a section for notes, where were written the main ideas exposed by each author.



**Table 1**

Citation (APA)	Research Focus	Theoretical Framework	Methodology	Key Findings	Relevance to Subtractive Bilingualism	Country	Poblation	Notes
Cummins, J. (1979)	Linguistic interdependence &	-Interaction between socio-cultural, linguistic	Theoretical analysis	Strong foundation for understanding: *Subtractive Vs. Additive	Explains why Subtractive Bilingualism happens when schools don't support	U.S.A, Canada	Elementary school children	It highlights the Threshold
De Houwer, A. (2007).	Parental language strategies to	Existing literature on intergenerational	Large-scale survey conducted in Flanders.	-Successfully raising children to speak two languages very much	-When both parents predominantly use the majority language, the probability of	Flanders, Belgium	Families with children aged 6	There is no guarantee of success in raising bilingual children at 100%.
Fishman, J. A. (1966)	Maintenance and Research on	-The phenomena of Language maintenance	-A nationwide study of Language maintenance	-Stabilization vs. Shift: Under certain conditions, bilingualism stabilizes.	-Discusses the decline in the use of immigrant mother tongues and the shift	The study refers to the strongest U.S.A, Canada	-Immigrant Generation Bilingual children in	-It discusses how Bilingualism develops when groups with
García, E. E. (1986)	Bilingual Education in the 21st century	-Functional Approach: Children concentrate Translanguaging & Sociolinguistics	Empirical studies, Descriptive surveys, Literature review & Case studies	The 'Developmental interdependence Hypothesis' and the 'Threshold U.S. Schools often do not support Bilingualism, leading to language	Concept of Subtractive Bilingualism: the development of the home language Directly relevant to Spanish-speaking children refusing to speak Spanish			It explores the social, linguistic, and cognitive attributes of Bilingual Useful for policy discussions
García, O., & Wei, L. (2014).	and education Historical and	Language, Public attitudes & policies in U.S.A. and Identities in Latin Youth: English Vs. Spanish						
Hanuta, K. (1986)	Psychological Language Use and Ideologies in U.S.A.							
López, A. A. (2020)			Psychological Monographs					
Peal, E., & Lambert, W. E. (1962)	The relation of bilingualism to Immigrant	Sociological perspective across different	Case studies of Heritage learners	Many Spanish speakers in the U.S. struggle to maintain their home	Explains why some students reject Spanish			Complexity of Heritage Languages Learners in U.S.A. Sociocultural
Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2001)	Heritages Languages in Diversity and	Identity Monolingual Ideologies, Language Policies and Language Attrition	Qualitative, historical analysis approach. Use Qualitative Case studie	-English dominant language colonial period; Status before the American	Coercive assimilation policies imposed (English-only boarding schools) relevant Shows real-life examples of Subtractive	U.S.A	Isn't specified but it is not Immigrant	It is useful to understand how demographic changes and
Wiley, T.G. (2014)	Monolingual Language loss in (1991) Bilingual Children	Primary language loss among immigrant	Nationwide survey -Case study approach.	-Children who become dominant in English often stop speaking their	Shows how peer groups and social pressure influence Language loss	U.S.A	Families with Immigrant	Important for explaining how early education affects language
Wong Fillmore, L. (2000)	Loss of Family Languages Growing Up Bilingual: Puerto	Sociolinguistic & Ethnographic	Narrative Analysis - Ethnographic Fieldwork Case study	-Many immigrant children in the U.S. experience significant loss of their Social Environment affects Bilingual Children's Language Use & Preference	-Experiences of immigrant children: while learning English, abandon of their	U.S.A	Families.	It is useful to understand the emotional and psychological Social and Linguistic environments. Shapiro of bilingualism: English
Zentella, A. C. (1997)						China		

Source: Own elaboration

In the same way, according to their relevance and pertinence to the present literature review, were added later another relevant authors such as Backer, C., and De Houwer, A. Additionally, according to the development of the three main sections were reviewed: 11 documents for the ‘Linguistic background’ section; 8 documents for ‘Child Input Factors’ section and 8 for ‘Relevance of Parent’s role’ section.

Regarding the ‘Linguistic background’ section, were revised articles published since 1980 to 2022. For the selection of this part, were included documents which refer to Minority Language Maintenance, Immigrant America, Heritage Languages in America, Language Policy and Ideology in the United States, Languages Ideologies, Language Assimilation, Monolingual Language Ideology in the United States, Language use in the United States, Native speaker perspectives, Official Nationalism and Imperialism, and Mother tongues and Nations.

Regarding the ‘Child Input Factors’ section, were revised articles published since 1965 to 2019. For the selection of this part, were included documents which refer to The Analysis of Multilingual Settings, Bilingual Program Models, Immersion Education for the Millenium, Bilingual Language Development, Loss and Maintenance of first language skills; Language, Culture and Immigration in Immigrant Children; Bilingual Education in the 21st Century, and Early Bilingualism.

Regarding the ‘Relevance of Parent’s role’ section., were revised articles published since 1999 to 2020. For the selection of this part, were included documents which refer to The role of parental Belief and Attitudes, Heritage language loss or shift among immigrants’ children,



Methods of parents raising children bilingually, Foundation of bilingual education and Bilingualism, A parents and teacher's guide to Bilingualism, Latino Parent Child English Language Fluency, Bilingually raised children just speak one language, and Harmonious Bilingualism.

## **Linguistic Background**

### **U.S. Linguistic Hegemony and American History**

Understanding bilingualism in the U.S. requires examining the nation's long-standing history of linguistic dominance. Since the colonial era, the ideology of "one nation, one language" has guided national identity, linking English to unity and social control (Wiley, 2014). Religious and political institutions historically used language as a unifying tool. As Anderson (2006) asserts, nationalism in the U.S. developed alongside dominant cultural practices, including the promotion of English and Latin as central linguistic traditions.

The concepts of "native speaker" and "non-native speaker" (NS/NNS) reflect implicit linguistic hierarchies. Balibar and Wallerstein (1991) argue that these labels can perpetuate exploitation and exclusion. In response, Cook (2002) introduced the term "L2 users" to counter the deficit view implied by "non-native." This term describes individuals who use a second language (L2) for real-life purposes. "L2 users" acknowledges linguistic competence without linking it to native-like fluency and reaffirms bilingual individuals as legitimate speakers (Cook & Singleton, 2014).

### **Language Ideologies and Language Policies in the U.S.A.**

The "English Only" movement, which gained momentum in the early 20th century, aims to limit the use of languages other than English in public and governmental spaces. It emerged partly in reaction to rising immigration from Spanish-speaking countries, positioning English as a symbol of national unity and identity (Lawton, 2007). According to Schmidt (2006), this movement touches on critical issues including educational policies for language minority children, linguistic access to civil rights, and proposals to amend the Constitution to declare English the official national language.

Anderson (2006) notes that English is often framed as the cohesive force of the nation, and is supported by ideologies that promote linguistic uniformity and the notion of a singular national identity (Bonfiglio, 2010). However, critics such as Zentella (1997) argue that the English Only movement can be seen as Hispanophobic, undermining the rights of millions of speakers of other languages—especially Spanish.



Indeed, as Wiley (2014) points out, integration into English remains a widespread and often mandatory trend for speakers of other languages.

### **Immigration and Heritage Languages**

U.S. immigration policy has long influenced language dynamics. Jernegan et al., 2005, as cited in Lawton, 2007, explain, acts such as the 1924 National Origins Act and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 reflect a history of regulating immigration to shape linguistic and ethnic demographics.

The term “heritage language,” as defined by Fishman (1966), includes immigrant languages, and Spanish-speaking Latinos in the U.S. fall into this category (Tesser et al., 2003). While “heritage language” reflects cultural ancestry, Baker and Jones (1998) caution that it can imply something outdated or primitive—emphasizing the past over the present and potentially devaluing the language’s global and technological relevance (Tesser et al., 2003).

Heritage language learners often grapple with questions of identity—whether belonging is determined more by language fluency or ethnic background. Valdés (1997) suggests that Spanish can unite communities and provide access to bilingual job markets. However, many learners internalize societal biases against non- English languages and may choose to distance themselves from their native language and culture.

Schiffman, as cited in Valdés and others (2003), describes how immigrants bring with them linguistic cultures—sets of behaviors, values, and beliefs associated with language use. Yet, as Fishman (1966) notes, immigrant languages often disappear within two generations, primarily due to the dominant influence of English (Tesser et al., 2003).

### **Status and Linguistic Culture**

In the U.S., the label “bilingual” is frequently used to describe economically disadvantaged, recently arrived immigrant children (Valdés et al., 2003). This usage reflects deeper ideologies of nationalism, standardization, and monolingualism that shape public attitudes toward bilingualism and language education. Cummins (1979) distinguishes between immersion programs (designed for majority-language children and supportive of bilingualism) and submersion programs (where minority-language children are placed in mainstream classes with minimal support). These differences are deeply tied to social attitudes, economic disparities, and teacher expectations.



Further, academic underperformance among bilingual students is often linked to the “linguistic mismatch” hypothesis—the gap between the language they use at home and the language of instruction (Unesco, 1953; Cummins, 1979). Such mismatches can impede learning and reinforce systemic inequalities in education.

### **Child’s Input Factors**

#### **Overview of Child Input Factors in Relation to Language Maintenance and Language Shift**

Several child-related factors influence whether a bilingual child maintains their heritage language (L1) or shifts toward exclusive use of the majority societal language (L2). According to Cummins (1979), two primary factors are central to this process: (1) the child’s conceptual-linguistic knowledge and (2) motivation to maintain L1 while learning L2. Additionally, Fishman (1966) identifies three categories of behavior that contribute to language shift or maintenance: attitudinal-affective behaviors, overt behavioral implementation, and cognitive responses to language.

Becker (1977) highlights three crucial aspects of children’s language development that support reading and language fluency: (a) vocabulary and conceptual understanding; (b) metalinguistic awareness of written language; and (c) the ability to process decontextualized language and use language for varied communicative functions (Becker, 1977, as cited in Cummins, 1979, p. 237).

Lambert (1967) and Fillmore (1970) as cited in Cummins, (1979) note that children’s motivation to acquire L2 is influenced by their desire to connect with the L2- speaking community. However, if L2 acquisition is perceived as a threat to the child’s identity or connection to their L1 community, motivation may decrease. Similarly, maintaining L1 depends heavily on affective outcomes, including identity, attitudes toward the home language, and comfort in using it in various domains. In other words, other variables also influence the input factors; such is the case of attitudinal-affective behaviors, overt behavioral implementation and the cognitive aspects of language response.

Fishman (1966) describes attitudinal-affective behaviors as emotions and loyalties tied to language. Children may feel pride or shame regarding their heritage language, shaping their willingness to use it. Attitudes toward L1 can range from loyalty and pride to embarrassment and rejection—depending largely on how the majority society views the minority language and its speakers.



It is essential to differentiate attitudes toward the language itself from those directed at its speakers and cultural associations.

Overt Behavioral Implementation refers to concrete actions that either support or hinder language use. These may include positive reinforcement (e.g., reading in the home language, speaking L1 at home) or passive neglect (e.g., avoiding L1 use in public). Language planning within the home and school environments—both intentional and informal—plays a significant role in supporting or impeding bilingual development (Fishman, 1966).

When it comes to cognitive aspects, these include awareness, understanding, and internal representations of language and identity. Fishman (1966) notes that little systematic knowledge exists about how group identity and language awareness affect behavior in situations of language contact—especially when such contact is perceived as threatening. This uncertainty complicates our understanding of whether language shift is primarily ideological or practical.

### **Immersion Vs. Submersion School Programs**

The distinction between immersion and submersion in educational settings has deep implications for language acquisition and retention. Immersion programs provide structured instruction in L2 while supporting L1 development, typically leading to additive bilingualism (Cummins, 1979). Submersion, by contrast, places minority- language children in majority-language classrooms without sufficient support, often resulting in subtractive bilingualism and L1 attrition.

Sociolinguistic research indicates that immersion is more effective in societies that value bilingualism (Lambert, 1975). In such contexts, children are more likely to develop strong skills in both languages. However, in environments where minority languages are devalued, submersion programs often result in identity conflict and reduced academic performance.

For example, immigrant children in some German kindergartens—where German is the dominant language—face initial nonverbal periods, showing limited participation and self-expression. This period, as described by Tabors (2008), Toppelberg et al. (2005), is a normal response to sudden L2 exposure and should not be confused with selective mutism. However, selective mutism, often more prolonged and affecting both L1 and L2, is particularly prevalent among immigrant children and reflects deeper psychological responses to linguistic displacement (Toppelberg et al., 2005).



Baker (2011) emphasizes that immersion programs help children consolidate their home language and cultural identity, contributing to positive self-esteem.

In contrast, submersion programs typically ignore the child's linguistic identity, leading to alienation and diminished self-worth. Unesco (1953) and Cummins (1979) both support the “linguistic mismatch” hypothesis, which suggests that discrepancies between home and school language without sufficient scaffolding create cognitive and emotional strain.

### **Language Loss and the Emotional Effects**

Language loss affects not only a child's linguistic competence but also their emotional and psychological wellbeing. Fillmore (2000) notes that when children lose their heritage language, families often experience miscommunication, cultural disconnection, and a loss of shared values and rituals. This unintentional shift contributes to identity disruption and emotional detachment.

Kouritzin (1999), as cited in Guardado (2002), conducted a qualitative study of language loss and found that the school environment plays a crucial role in shaping language use patterns among minority children. ChumakHorbatsch (2008) also observes that children's language preferences shift as they assimilate new behaviors and rituals in school.

In supportive bilingual environments, teachers may encourage the use of multiple languages, promoting pride in heritage while fostering second language acquisition. For example, children might be invited to sing songs in different languages or express themselves in L1 with support from peers and educators. These inclusive practices can reduce the risk of identity loss and improve self-confidence.

Baker (2014) asserts that language is a fundamental part of identity. The loss of L1 can lead to low self-esteem and a sense of disconnection from family and community. Children who cannot communicate effectively with parents and extended family often experience psychological strain and a diminished sense of belonging (Fillmore, 2000).

According to Fillmore (1991), as cited in De Houwer, 2019, emotional regulation is also linked to language competence, and the loss of L1 can impair a child's ability to express complex emotions. Language shift across generations—especially when driven by societal pressure— can also diminish the symbolic and emotional value of cultural rituals and philosophies (Tesser *et al.*, 2003). This loss usually turns into conflict, emotional distress, or weakened familial bonds. Fishman (1991) argues that



maintaining heritage languages is vital not only for cultural preservation but also for emotional resilience and family unity.

Even when parents are committed to transmitting their native language, external factors may undermine their efforts. A study by Chumak-Horbatsch (1999), as cited in Guardado, 2002, found that Ukrainian-speaking children in Toronto often identified English as their dominant language, despite attending heritage language schools. Similarly, Kouritzin (1999) reported that heritage speakers aged 9 to 59 experienced language loss and its social and psychological consequences—often citing the devaluation of their language and culture by schools and society (as cited in Guardado, 2002). Cummins (1995) concludes that such individuals often undergo a “devaluation of their cultural identity” because of linguistic marginalization.

### **Parents' Role Implications**

#### **Parents' acculturation process and their relation to the transmission of the language**

When parents immigrate to other countries, they may experience also dramatic effects on their well-being due to the acculturation process. According to De Houwer (2019), “recently immigrated individuals may suffer from acculturative stress. Others, also those with a less recent immigration background, may have experiences with non-language related discrimination” (p. 14). In countries like Germany for instance, parents who do not speak the societal language, feel ashamed of speaking their own language in front of their children when they meet with them at school. Instead, they make a great effort to rise to the occasion, but feelings of helplessness and frustration remain evident as they still fail to meet the expected standards for optimal communication.

Not only in public places, but also at home, the change in language use among parents is framed within a context of frustration. Additionally, the linguistic impact on children in their early school years leaves a mark on their choice of language. Several studies (Leist-Villis, 2004; Kaveh, 2018; Mills, 2004; Wong Fillmore, 1991, as cited in De Houwer, 2019) suggest that many mothers notice that their children do not want to speak to them in their mother tongue even after they have just started kindergarten in the L2. In the same way, as the author also points out, because of this type of interaction, there is an increase in the use of the societal language by children at home, and parents gradually begin to stop using their



mother tongue, as noted by E-Rramdani (2003, as cited in De Houwer, 2019). Eventually, the whole family communicates in the societal language, which leaves parents feeling regret and shame.

On the other hand, parents' language proficiency can significantly influence their children's choice of language use. According to De Houwer (2017, 2020), there are cases where parents master one of the languages but communicate to a lesser extent in the other one. Their enunciation, grammar, or vocabulary might be quite distant and differ from what is expected, which results in disapproval from the children's side. In addition to this, parents, due to their daily work routines, where communicating in L2 is the norm, are the ones who consequently adapt to the use of the societal language and bring this habit into their homes. For example, in German workplaces, only those who are fluent in German are accepted. Unconsciously, this pattern of linguistic behavior permeates the human subconscious, and foreign parents take it home with them, leaving aside the use and transmission of their L1.

#### **Parents' challenges and further suggestions**

Parents wish themselves to have children that do well in both languages, however there is a strong insecurity about how to achieve that goal. According to Vasquez (1991, as cited in De Houwer, 2017), preschool teachers, school nurses, and school psychologists may contribute to parental insecurity and sometimes advise parents not to use the minority language at home. In contrast, parental languages attitudes and their languages choices are crucial to have an "Harmonious Bilingualism", which as the Autor points out, allude to those familiar contexts where young children do not struggle because of the bilingual setting and can evidence advantages by experiencing bilingualism. (De Houwer, 2019).

On the other hand, approaches like "one person, one language" (OPOL) are an effective strategy on the route to effective bilingualism. According to Baker (2014), this strategy consists in the fact that mother or father speak her/his language to the child and the other one does the same respectively. Both must keep an unwavering position by maintaining communication in that way and avoid the tendency to shift to the contrary language. In this way, as the author continues, there is a great benefit because the children learn two languages from birth, the fears by switching languages decrease, and the parents become an example to follow concerning language proficiency.

However, it is essential that parents can overcome the obstacles of raising bilingual children. As Baker (2014) points out, parents must persevere in their efforts. Likewise, it requires a great deal of



commitment, which in some cases can be emotionally and physically draining; parents may even end up feeling incompetent and like a failure, especially if the goal of achieving perfect bilingualism does not occur.

Furthermore, it is mothers who bear the burden in childrearing, then as Okita (2002) states, even when parents choose not to raise their children bilingually, language still plays a central role in parenting. In mixed-language families, the mother who speaks the minority language often has to use her second language when interacting with her child. She may also face her own concerns such as the necessity to simply be themselves, rather than constantly acting as language teachers at home.

Overall, the burden becomes emotionally challenging for mothers who realized that keeping a balance often meant using the minority language less, (Okita, as cited in Baker, 2014, p. 86). However, according to Lanza (1992, 1997) as cited in De Houwer (2017), mothers could make use of “monolingual discourse strategies”. These strategies include pretending not to understand when children use the majority language, encouraging them to rephrase their sentence in the minority language, or translating their words into the minority language and asking them to repeat what they meant using that language.

## **CONCLUSION**

The literature shows that successful bilingualism in immigrant families emerges from the interaction of multiple forces: parental commitment, societal ideologies, historical legacies, and institutional practices. While parents are central in transmitting their heritage language, they cannot shoulder this responsibility alone (De Houwer, A., 2020). Educational systems, government policies, and social attitudes play decisive roles in either reinforcing or undermining family efforts.

Similarly, the degree of participation, commitment, and empowerment on the part of academia is of vital importance (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2008). Teachers, in particular, are positioned not only as academic instructors but also as facilitators of identity formation and cultural pride. They must go beyond their academic teaching and promote spaces that strengthen such important aspects as identity and self-confidence.

The hegemony and supremacy of the English language over other languages have historical and social roots, and its global dominance is not accidental (Wiley, 2014). Likewise, society in general has been



responsible for creating and feeding ideologies and situations of stigmatization that consequently transform and generate new linguistic behaviors.

Future research should prioritize longitudinal and comparative studies that examine how societal ideologies intersect with parental strategies and children's identity development. Such work could illuminate not only why bilingualism succeeds or fails but also how immigrant families can be supported in sustaining both linguistic integration and cultural preservation.

## **BIBLIOGRÁFIC REFERENCES**

- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Rev. ed.). Verso.
- Baker, C. (2011). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (5th ed.). Multilingual Matters.
- Baker, C. (2014). *Parents' and teachers' guide to bilingualism* (4th ed.). Multilingual Matters.
- Balibar, É., & Wallerstein, I. (1991). *Race, nation, class: Ambiguous identities*. Verso.
- Becker, W. C. (1977). Teaching reading and language to the disadvantaged—What we have learned from field research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 47 (4), 518–543.
- Bonfiglio, T. P. (2010). *Mother tongues and nations: The invention of the native speaker*. De Gruyter Mouton.
- Chumak-Horbatsch, R. (2008). *Language change in the bilingual childhood: A sociolinguistic study*. Multilingual Matters.
- Cook, V. (2002). Background to the L2 user. In V. Cook (Ed.), *Portraits of the L2 user* (pp. 1–28). Multilingual Matters.
- Cook, V., & Singleton, D. (2014). *Key topics in second language acquisition*. Multilingual Matters.
- Cummins, J. (1979). Linguistic interdependence and the educational development of bilingual children. *Review of Educational Research*, 49, 222–251.
- Cummins, J. (1995). Identity, power, and language pedagogy in bilingual education. In J. Frederickson & A. Cline (Eds.), *Languages and learning* (pp. 23–42). Multilingual Matters.
- De Houwer, A. (2007). Parental language input patterns and children's bilingual use. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 28, 411–424. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716407070221>



- De Houwer, A. (2017). Minority language parenting in Europe and children's well-being. In N. Cabrera & B. Leyendecker (Eds.), *Handbook on positive development of minority children and youth* (pp. 231–246). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-43645-6\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-43645-6_14)
- De Houwer, A. (2019). *Harmonious bilingualism: Well-being for families in bilingual settings*. Cambridge University Press.
- De Houwer, A. (2020). Why do so many children who hear two languages speak just a single language? *Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht*, 25.
- Fillmore, L. W. (2000). Loss of family languages: Should educators be concerned? *Theory Into Practice*, 39, 203–210. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3904\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3904_3)
- Fishman, J. A. (1966). Language maintenance and language shift: The American immigrant case within a general theoretical perspective. *Sociologus*, 16, 19–39.
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages. *Multilingual Matters*.
- Guardado, M. (2002). Loss and maintenance of first language skills: Case studies of Hispanic families in Vancouver. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 58, 341–363. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.58.3.341>
- Kouritzin, S. G. (1999). *Face[t]s of first language loss*. Routledge.
- Lawton, R. (2007). *Language policy and ideology in the United States: A critical analysis of “English Only” discourse* (Master’s thesis, Lancaster University).
- Lambert, W. E. (1967). A social psychology of bilingualism. *Journal of Social Issues*, 23, 91–109.
- Lambert, W. E. (1975). Culture and language as factors in learning and education. In A. Wolfgang (Ed.), *Education of immigrant students*. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Okita, T. (2002). *Invisible work: Bilingualism, language choice and childrearing in intermarried families*. John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/impact.12>
- Tabors, P. O. (2008). *One child, two languages: A guide for preschool educators of children learning English as a second language*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- Tesser, C., Peyton, J. K., Ranard, D. A., & McGinnis, S. (2003). *Heritage languages in America: Preserving a national resource*. CAL.



- Toppelberg, C. O., Tabors, P. O., Coggins, A., Lum, K., & Burger, C. (2005). Differential diagnosis of selective mutism in bilingual children. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 44 (6), 592–595. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.chi.0000157549.87078.f8>
- UNESCO. (1953). *The use of vernacular languages in education*. UNESCO.
- Valdés, G. (1997). The teaching of Spanish to bilingual Spanish-speaking students: Outstanding issues and unanswered questions. In M. C. Colombi & F. X. Alarcón (Eds.), *La enseñanza del español a hispanohablantes: Praxis y teoría* (pp. 8–44). Houghton Mifflin.
- Valdés, G., González, S. V., López García, D., & Márquez, P. (2003). Language ideology: The case of Spanish in departments of foreign languages. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 34 (1), 3–26.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). Selected population profile in the United States (S0201): American Community Survey 5-year estimates. <https://data.census.gov>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). Selected population profile in the United States: ACS 1-year estimates.
- Wiley, T. G. (2014). Diversity, super-diversity, and monolingual language ideology in the United States: Tolerance or intolerance? *Review of Research in Education*, 38 , 1–32.
- Wiley, T. G., & García, O. (2016). Language policy and planning in language education: Legacies, consequences, and possibilities. *The Modern Language Journal*, 100 (S1), 48–63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12303>
- Zentella, A. C. (1997). *Growing up bilingual: Puerto Rican children in New York*. Blackwell.

