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## An Interdisciplinary Framework for Speech-Language Pathologists

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Development and Its Disorders

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# An Interdisciplinary Framework for Speech-Language Pathologists: A Closer Look at Bilingual Language Development and Its Disorders

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*Abstract: Speech-Language Pathologists examine language not only in its organization of complex linguistic structures, but also in terms of the processes on which it is partially dependent. Consequently, the object of research in speech-language pathology is language, together with human communication and human cognition as well as the social interactions that come into play. When studying language pathologies, we must be able to identify where the difficulties lie. It is not only the linguistic components that must be considered, but also the neurological, anatomical, physiological, cognitive, social and pragmatic aspects that are intrinsically associated. This paper defines interdisciplinarity within the field of speech-language pathology, more specifically, the study of bilingualism and the development of linguistic competencies, using an epistemological and praxeological standpoint. A theoretical framework which includes theories on emergentism, bioecological systems and dynamic systems is proposed in order to assess and treat monolingual and bilingual children with and without language impairments using a holistic and interdisciplinary approach.*

*Keywords: Speech-Language Pathology, Interdisciplinarity, Language Impairment*

## Preface

In recent years, it has been shown that the development of linguistic competencies is chaotic rather than linear (de Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor 2007; Herdina and Jessner 2002; Larsen-Freeman 1997; Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008). These authors have also shown that language development cannot be predicted and is shaped by a wide range of interconnected factors, both internal and external, such as one's motivation, aptitude, previous language knowledge, environment, input received and feedback given (Lowie, Verspoor, and de Bot 2009). All of these factors irrefutably call on many disciplines in order to better understand the development of linguistic competencies in one or two languages.

In this article we will highlight the fact that the profession of speech-language pathology is highly interdisciplinary. We will also aim to answer these questions: 1) What fundamentally distinguishes interdisciplinary research from monodisciplinary research? and 2) In what way can an interdisciplinary approach be useful to research on the bilingual development of language in speech-language pathology? We will also define interdisciplinarity within the field of speech-language pathology, more specifically, the study of bilingualism and the development of linguistic competencies, using an epistemological and praxeological standpoint. Speech-language pathology professionals, Speech-language Pathologists (SLPs), work with the full range of human communication and its disorders. SLPs assess and diagnose speech (i.e. phonation, articulation, fluency, resonance, and voice, including aeromechanical components of respiration); language (i.e. phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatic/social aspects of communication); cognitive-communication (i.e. attention, memory, problem solving, executive functions); and swallowing disorders (or upper aerodigestive functions such as infant feeding). They also treat speech, language, cognitive-communication and swallowing disorders in individuals of all ages, from infants to the elderly (ASHA 2010). Each discipline has its own