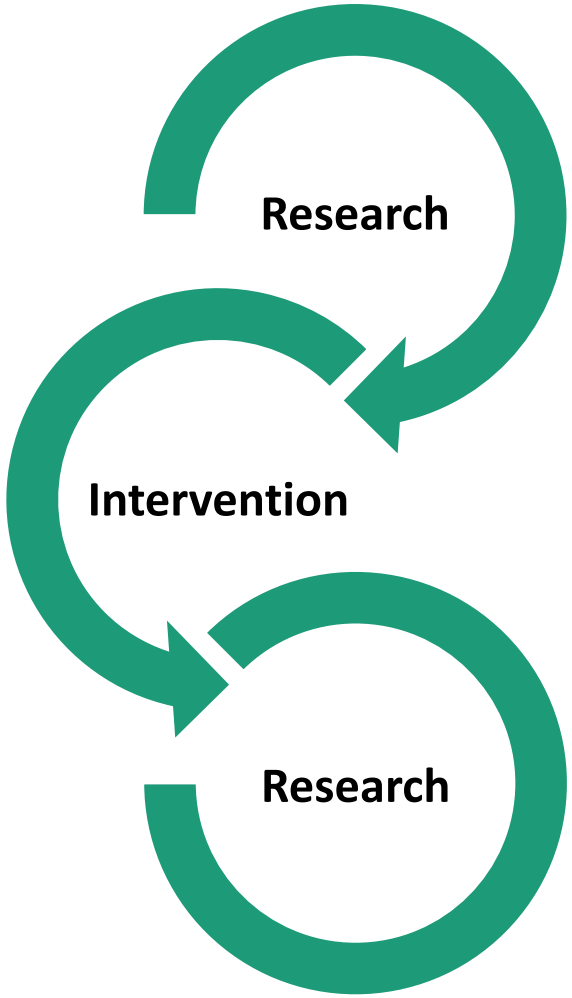
Enabling Bi-literacy Patterns in Ethiopian Immigrant Families in Israel: A Socio-Educational Challenge

Anat Stavans
Beit Berl College, Kfar Saba, Israel

ENS, ICAR, Lyon, 23.10.2019

Today's Presentation

- **Background and Motivation: The languages of Israel and 4G multilingualism**
- **The forces of Multilingualism: LP = FLP + LEP**
- **Deciphering multilingualism and Literacy:**
  - **Research FLP (parents)**
  - **Intervention (in class)**
- **Concluding Remarks**



Multilingualism in Israel

Complex Human Language Laboratory

Why?

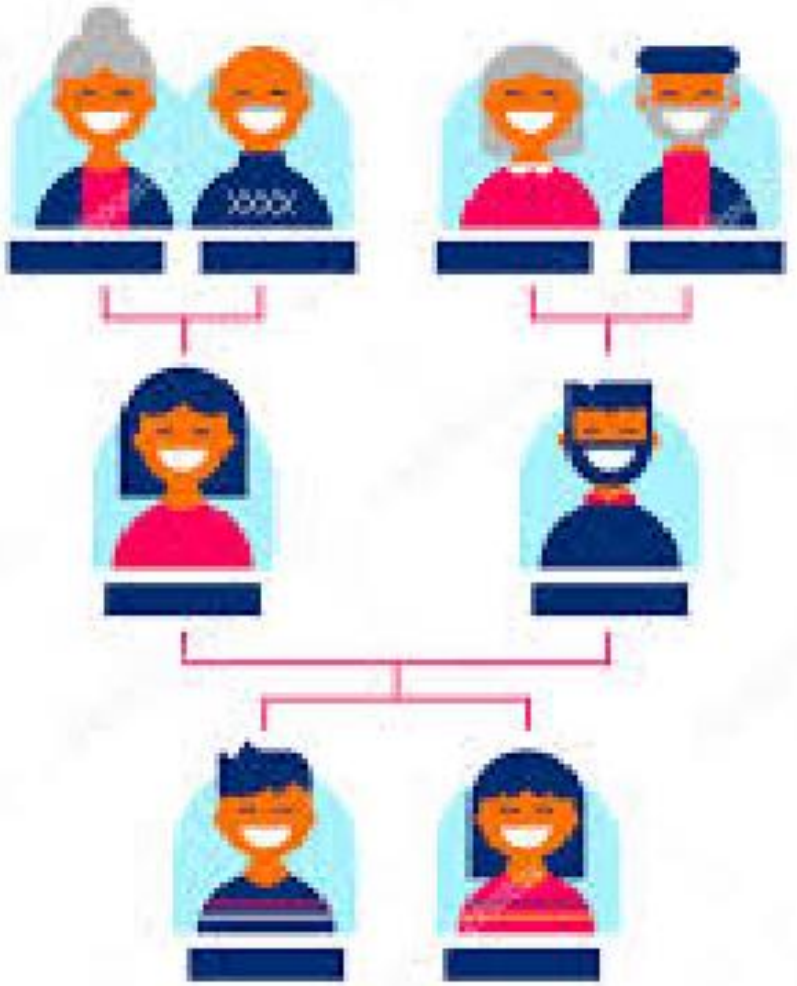
The languages of Israel

Official L	Major FL	Jewish Lang (endangered)	Immigrant Community L	Elective FL at School
• Hebrew • Arabic	• English	• Yiddish, • Ladino, • Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Tat, Judeo-Berber	• Jewish: Russian, Polish, Hungarian, English, French, Amharic, Tigrinya, Spanish, German, Rumanian • Non-Jewish: Armenian, Assyrian (Aramaic), Circassian	• French, • German, • Japanese, • Chinese, • IL Sign Language

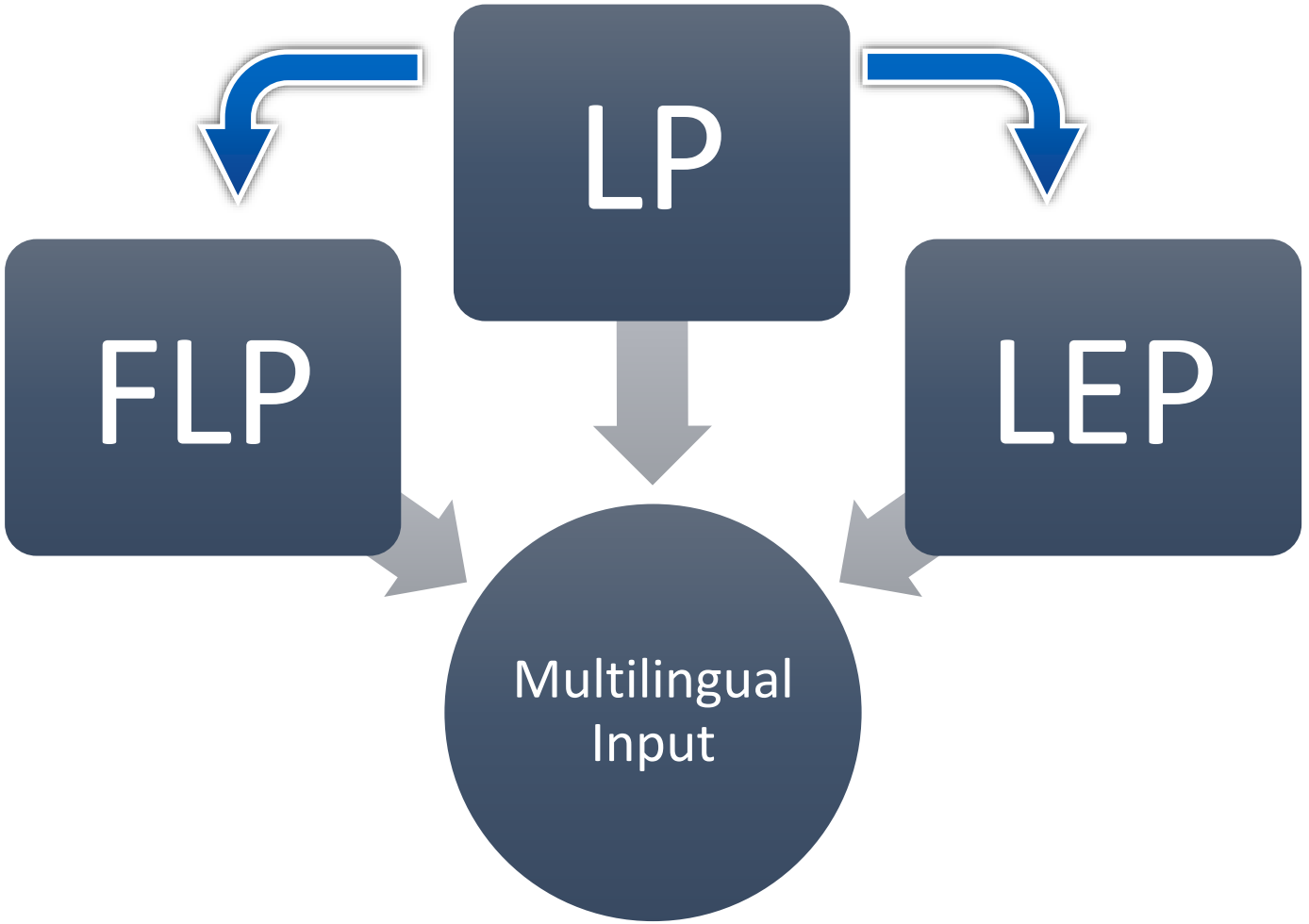
So…

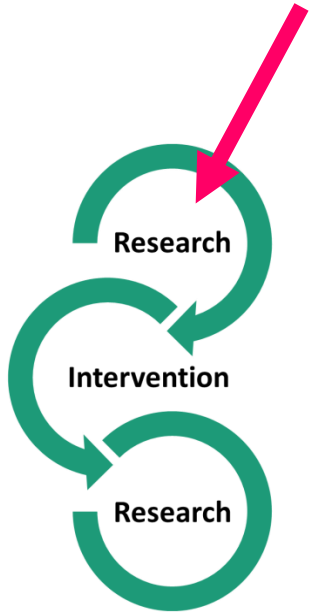
In many cases …

Multilingualism Permeates Generations Across a Lifespan



Becoming and Being a Multilingual is driven by …





What is Language Policy (and Planning)?

POLICY

- planned
- multi-lingual/-cultural environments
- compare/evaluate language status/function and differentially impact the varieties
- reflect power relations among groups

PLANNING

- planning generates policy (eg Schiffman, Ricento)
- But “a great deal of language policy-making... [is] haphazard or uncoordinated... far removed from the language planning ideal” (Fettes 1997: 14)

Family Language Policy (FLP)

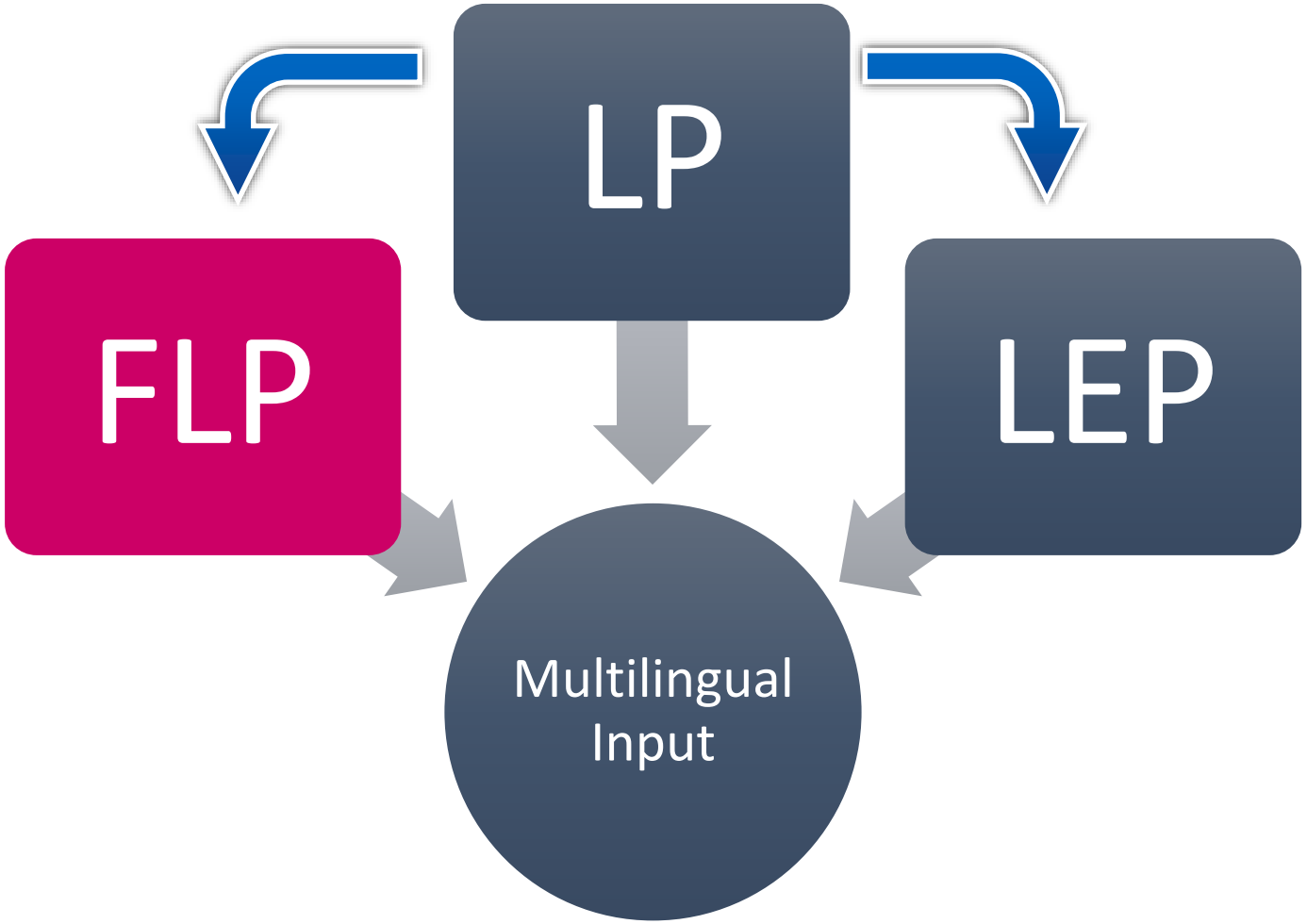
language ideologies of family members;

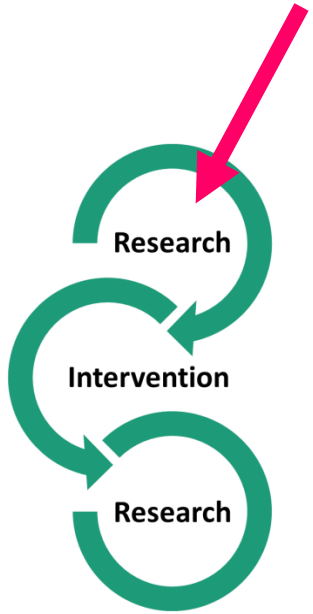
language practices;

language management.

(Spolsky 2004, 2009, 2012)

In Immigrants …





FLP: Literacy, multilingualism and Immigration

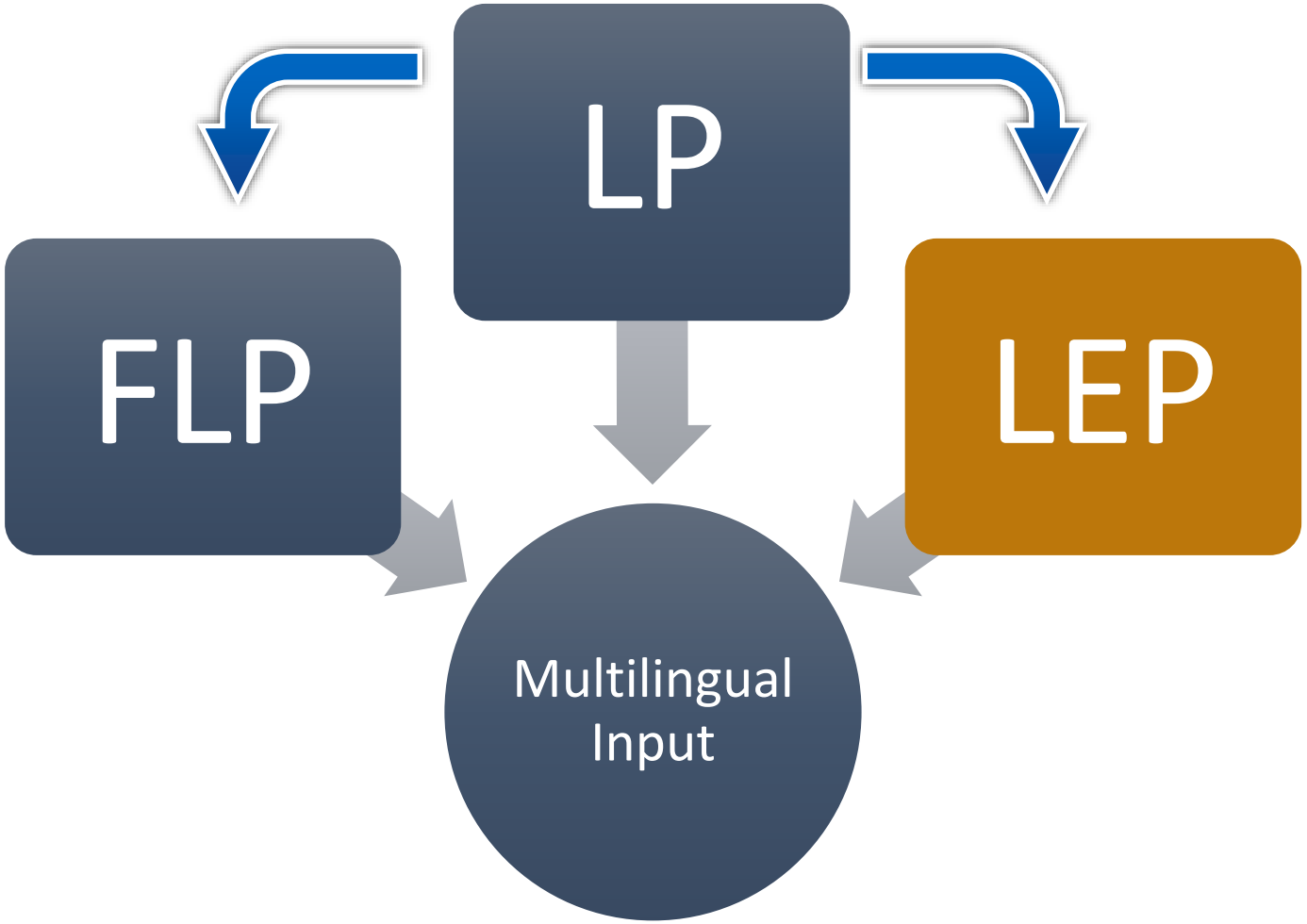
- Changes: borders, culture, emotion, behavior, expectations, roles, perceptions → instability;
- Migration: “bodies” ≠ “selves”;
- Early literacy in the family different to majority: parents provisions, siblings and grandparents, different interactive communicative opportunities;
- Early Literacy from Home to School depends on: not only family responsibility, family involvement in school, authentic communicative practices at home and in school.

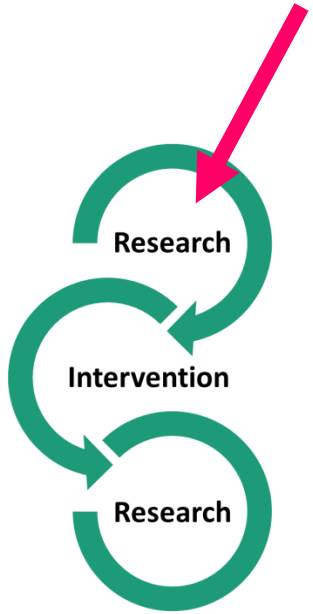
Multilingualism and Multiliteracy Development

- Family and parental characteristics affect:
  - the **maintenance** of the original culture (Caudill, 1969; Frankel, 1982; Greenfield 1994; Roer-Strier, 2000); and
  - the **integration** process into the new culture.

- A **close analysis** and understanding of **parental perceptions and their position** regarding their children's education and bilingualism far better that information gather through child's performance on tests or teacher's evaluation → we get something that school cannot measure.

In immigrants …





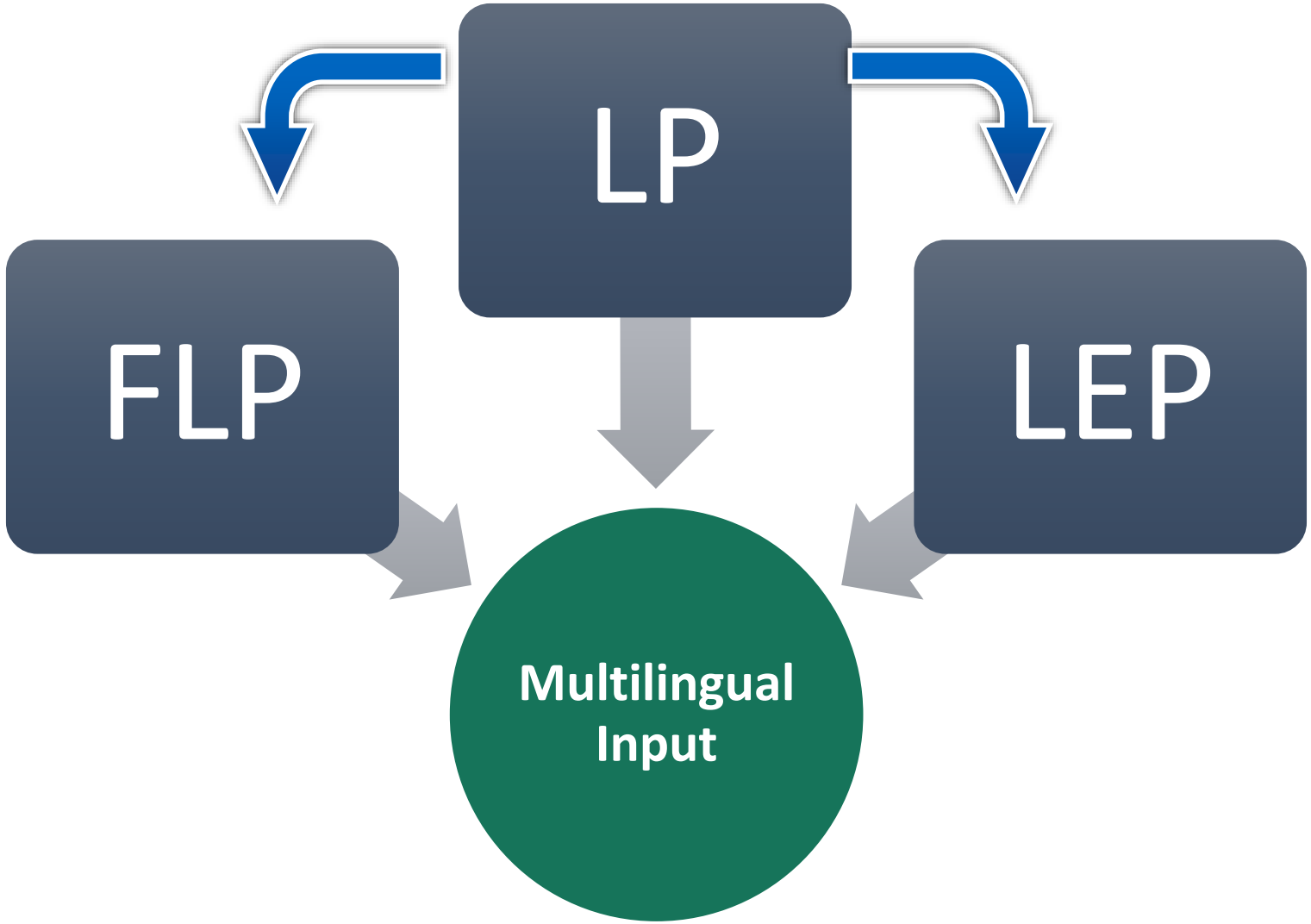
LEP: Literacy, multilingualism and Immigration

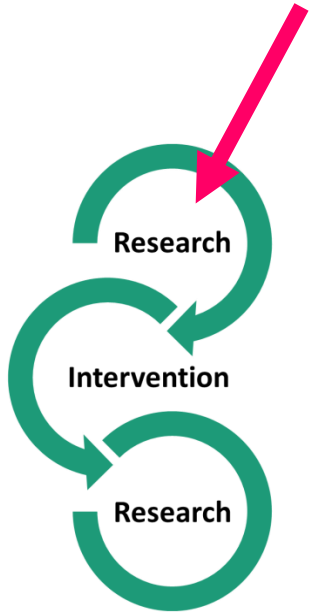
- Home literacy contributes to the child's school readiness;
- "Walking the walk" from home to school literacy is the responsibility of the institutions – both formal and informal;
- Discontinuous development
  - Informal language acquisition -- at home
  - Formal literacy acquisition -- at school

- Immigrant and minority populations
  - Scholastic achievements/national "standards"

    ≠
  - Literacy characteristics with which immigrant children enter the formal educational system
- Home and school literacy differ in terms of: Literacy Orientation, context, emphasis, cohesion, discourse, modality;
- Narratives – common to both school and home – differ in terms of: context and environment, interaction, participants, discourse, choice of theme/activity, modality.

In immigrants …





Where does input come from?

No permission to learn

not passive learners

One Language

Multifaceted learning of Language and Literacy

2+ Languages

RESEARCH: OUR STUDY

Ethiopian Immigrant Families

Why?

- Philanthropy
- Non-western
- Low socioeconomic/underpriviledged
- Weak immigration

Who?

- Families: 60% have 5 or more children; 20% are single mothers families; predominance of older father (65) and younger mother (often not single wife)
- Education: little education (at most grade schooling); most children had no education prior to immigration
- Language: L1 = Amharic and L2=Hebrew; 45% of parents have difficulties with spoken L2 and 75% report they do not read or write in L2 (nor in L1).

Literacy Patterns in Bilingual Ethiopian Immigrant Families in Israel : A study of FLP

Q1:

To what extent do parents perceive their activities at home as contributing to schooling in the new community?

Q2:

Do these parents have literacy provisions anchored in their cultural capital that they can provide their children with?

Stavans, A. (2015). Enabling bi-literacy patterns in Ethiopian immigrant families in Israel: A socio-educational challenge. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *12*, 178–195.

The Study

Subjects

Parent's Age (Average)	Target Child Age (Range)	Dyads (n)
32;10	3;0-3;11	13
34;4	4;0-4;11	15
33;9	5;0-5;11	15
36;10	6;0-6;11	14
33;4	7;0-8;0	11

Methodology

Questionnaire:
About Child (9 indexes)
About Parent (6 questionnaires)

Extended
Discourse Tasks

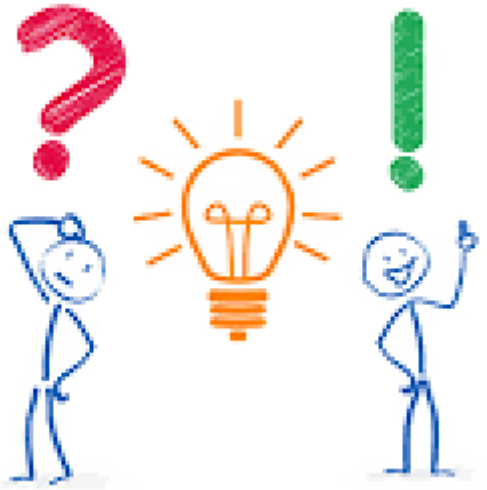
Methodology Q1: Questionnaire Battery filled by PARENTS

About Child (9 indexes):

- Normative development
- The child's bi/monolingualism
- The child's socialization habits
- Pre/Home-literacy practices
- Engagement in formal education
- Engagement in informal education
- Parent attitudes to educational system
- Family income
- Family socio-cultural practices

About Parent (6 questionnaires):

- The parental bilingualism
- The attitude towards language and multilingualism
- The purpose and use of the languages
- Ethnolinguistic vitality and status of community and languages
- The subjective language ability



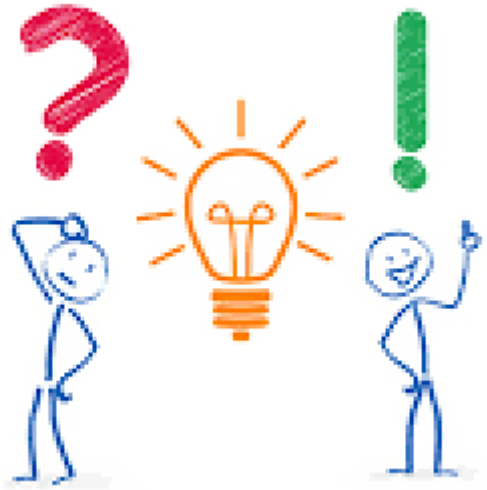
Question 1

a. Ethiopian immigrant parents similar to veteran Israeli parents (child's development, language and literacy, socialization, etc.);

b. Ethiopian parents are involved in the child's development, socialization and pre-literacy practices only until formal education.

c. Once formal education begins, Ethiopian parents feel that they no longer can fulfill the role of 'educators'.

Stavans, Anat, Olshtain, Elite and Goldzweig, Gil(2009)'Parental perceptions of children's literacy and bilingualism: the case of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel',Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development,30:2,111 — 126 To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/01434630802307916



Question 1

d. Ethiopian immigrant language practices show that:

- Pre-school age: parents L1 is used (mostly at home) and there is a positive attitude towards its maintenance;
- School age: parents assess higher L1 than L2;
- Older age: greater use, ability and attitude towards L2.

FLP changes from pre-formal education to formal education of the child

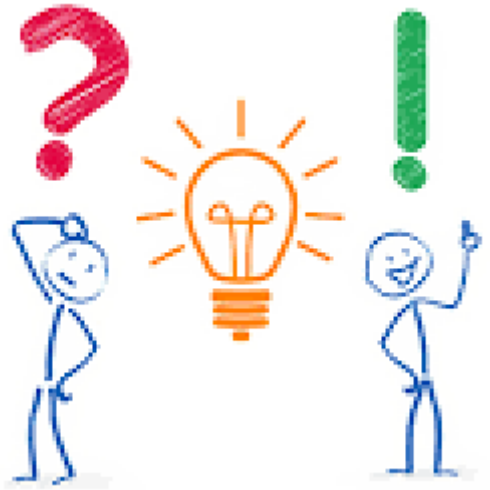
Stavans, Anat, Olshtain, Elite and Goldzweig, Gil(2009)'Parental perceptions of children's literacy and bilingualism: the case of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel',Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development,30:2,111 — 126 To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/01434630802307916

FLP: Ethiopian Families in Israel

"linguistic currency"

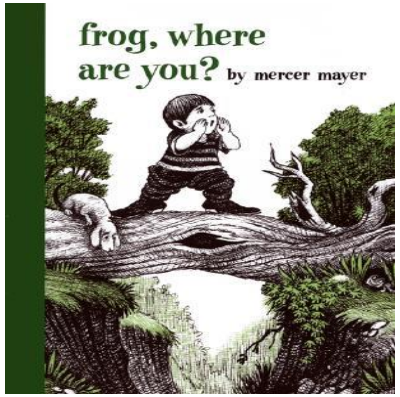
"linguistic currency exchange and conversion rate"

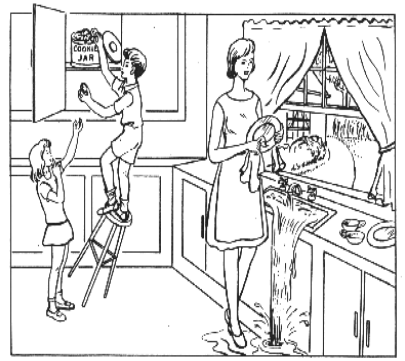
"the market value of the currency"



Extended Discourse Tasks

Experiential Story (Labov & Waletsky)	Frog Where Are You (Mercer Mayer	Cookie Theft (Boston Diagnostic Test)	Parental Childhood Story





Question 2

Do these parents have literacy provisions anchored in their cultural capital that they can provide their children with?

Q2: Conclusions

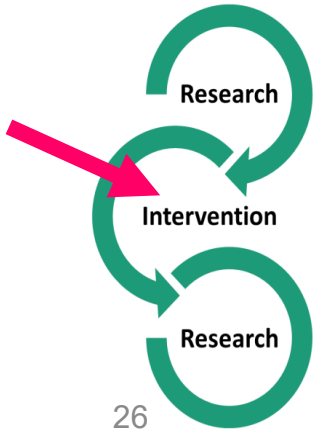
- Ethiopian parental practices are different from those expected by the mainstream educational system.
- Ethiopian parents engage more when their child is young.
- Ethiopian parents have different narrative style and culture (i.e., choices of tasks and age appropriate style).
- Ethiopian parents tell stories, they do not read stories.
- Ethiopian narratives are anchored in unique cultural folktales and fable genre (themes around people and animals).
- The extended discourse lexical density in extended texts is high (TTR .7) across the ages.
- Their stories length drop between the age of 4-5 when children enter K but picks up at age of 6 (their narratives are in L1 – the drop is due to the heavy exposure of L2).
- Their oral narratives conform to the canonic narrative structure as in classic children's stories or the western cannons.

Anat Stavans (2012): Language policy and literacy practices in the family: the case of Ethiopian parental narrative input, Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, DOI:10.1080/01434632.2011.638073

From FLP to LEP: Early Literacy from Home to School

Home

School



Language Education Policy (LEP) and literacy

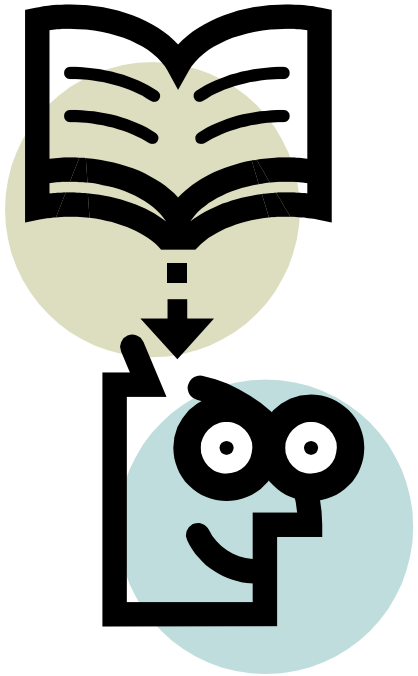
Literacy is central to our understanding of education.

Literacy is more than a mere descriptor of the skills taught and learned within schools.

The elements fundamental to how we understand literacy – language and culture.

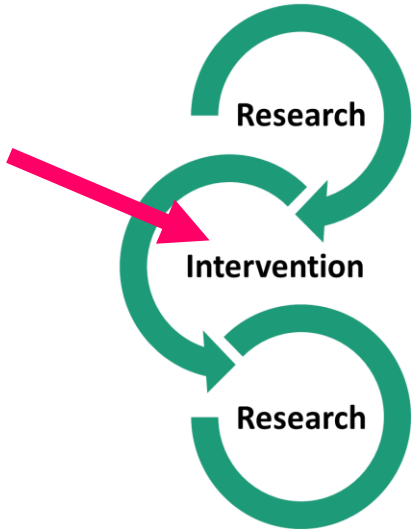
Inevitably literacy is based on the relationship between language and society – the sociocultural perspective.

So how can we make this happen?



THEORY AND RESEARCH

PRACTICE AND IMPLEMENTATION



An Intervention Program

Examples:

“ A Chorus Line”

The Project Approach: Underlying Principles

- It is long-term
- It yields a product borne of the process of achieving certain goals (goal-oriented)
- The product is driven by the interaction between addresser and addressee – familiar interlocutor (interaction-driven)
- It is a niche to language enhancement both spoken and written forms.
- The Project is a learning framework (not a teaching framework).
- The decisions regarding the Project are always mutual negotiations between the adult (in our case K-teacher) and the children.

The Project Approach: Stages

- Introduce the children to situations that require solutions.
- Enable authentic texts productions chosen by the speaker/writer that have a communicative purpose.
- Introduce and generate work on as many spoken and written genres.
- Encourage multiple uses of language with different purposes, situations and interlocutors.

An Example:
A Chorus Line

Hebrew: /lehaka/ = a groups of…

- An attack of a flock of herons
- Discussion about the word /lehaka/ as group: of animals (winged), a band or music group (not a choir) , a dance ensemble.
- What is a /lehaka/? What other words seem to be related – semantically and morphosyntactically.
- Group – is the class a /lehaka/?

No … but

An Example: A Chorus Line
Hebrew: /lehaka/ = a groups of…

A decision …

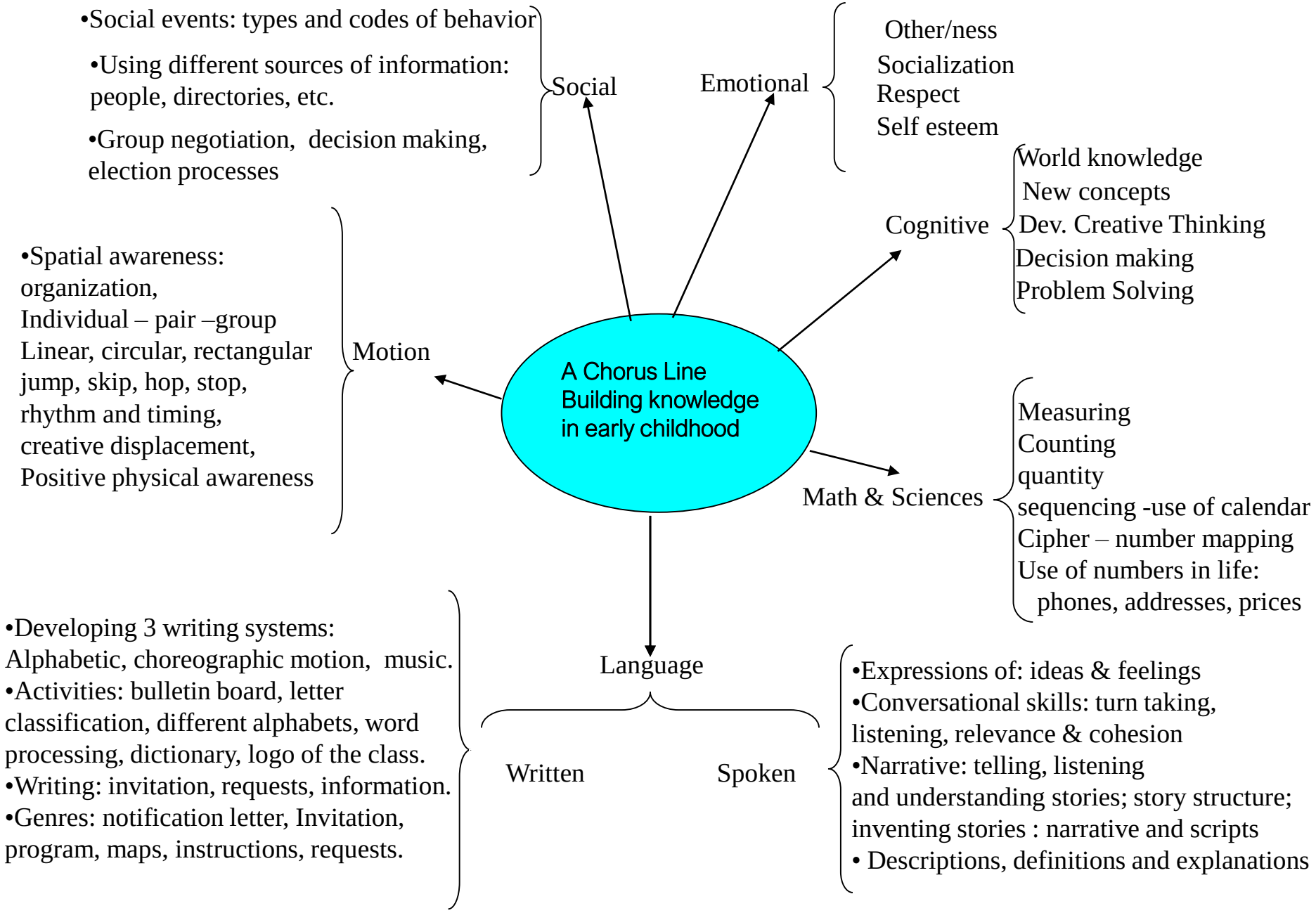
a “dance ensemble”

Product …

Performances throughout the year

+

End – of – year party show: A Chorus Line


A Chorus Line
Building knowledge
in early childhood
Social
•Social events: types and codes of behavior
•Using different sources of information: people, directories, etc.
•Group negotiation, decision making, election processes
Emotional
Other/ness
Socialization
Respect
Self esteem
Cognitive
World knowledge
New concepts
Dev. Creative Thinking
Decision making
Problem Solving
Motion
•Spatial awareness: organization,
Individual – pair –group
Linear, circular, rectangular
jump, skip, hop, stop,
rhythm and timing,
creative displacement,
Positive physical awareness
Math & Sciences
Measuring
Counting
quantity
sequencing -use of calendar
Cipher – number mapping
Use of numbers in life:
phones, addresses, prices
Language
Written
•Developing 3 writing systems: Alphabetic, choreographic motion, music.
•Activities: bulletin board, letter classification, different alphabets, word processing, dictionary, logo of the class.
•Writing: invitation, requests, information.
•Genres: notification letter, Invitation, program, maps, instructions, requests.
Spoken
•Expressions of: ideas & feelings
•Conversational skills: turn taking, listening, relevance & cohesion
•Narrative: telling, listening and understanding stories; story structure; inventing stories : narrative and scripts
• Descriptions, definitions and explanations

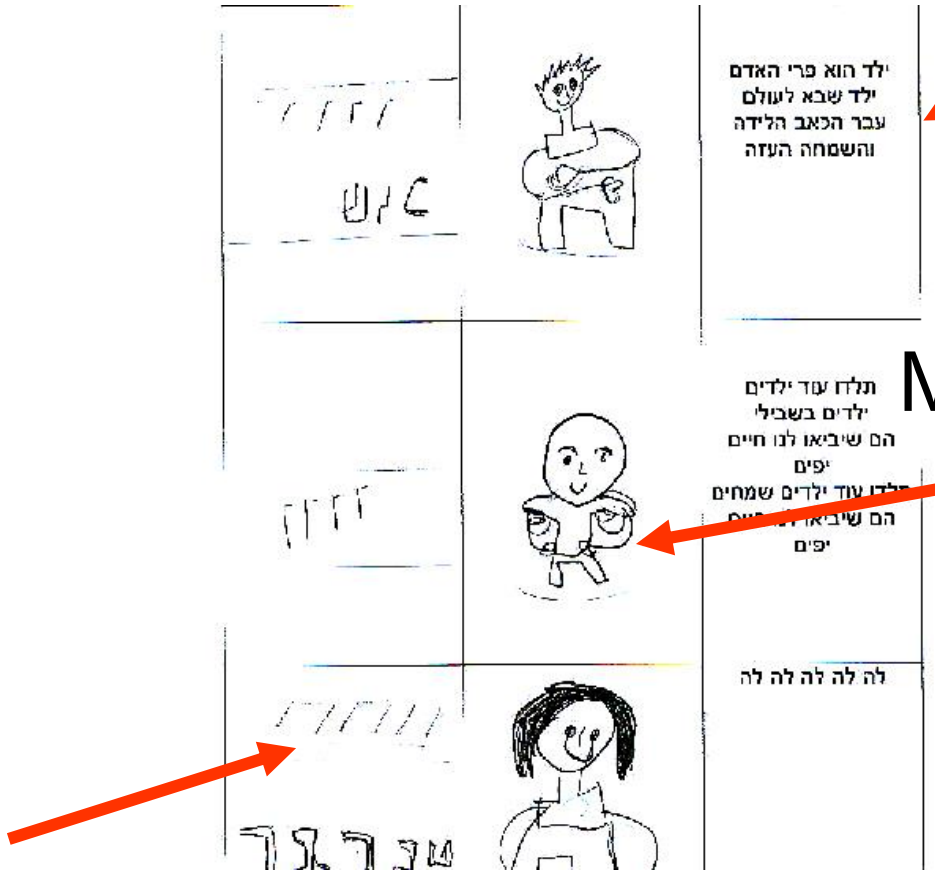
Writing in three notational systems

Cue Cards:

Alphabet

Motion

Music



Other projects such as:

Our Kindergarten's Cookbook

Our Perfume Factory

Children's Games around the World Museum Exhibit

What can we learn from this research?

What Teachers do at school in terms of language and literacy input and development:

- Is driven by curriculum
- External forces dictate what and how and when things are done
- Their own beliefs about multilingualism do not always get manifested in their teaching
- Their experience and self – esteem frees or constraints their innovation and creative abilities
- The language use and attitudes are restricted to the dictates of the educational system – mainly monolingual
- Their experiences and knowledge in education

What can we learn from this research?

What **Parents** do at home in terms of language and literacy input and development:

- Depends on their language ideology
- External forces that influence their language practices at home
- Their own beliefs about multilingualism
- Their abilities in the different languages
- The language use and attitudes
- Their experiences and knowledge in the language

What can we learn from this research?

Deep theoretical and research background

Plus

A reasonable albeit open-ended and flexible intervention

Plus

Experience (teachers) and willingness (parents and teachers)

CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!!

Merci de votre attention!

Thank you for your attention !

תודה על ההקשבה!