So far:

- Language learning as a way to pass on knowledge over generations.
- Language learning as a way to pass on “biases” to the next generation.
- But does the language learned matter?

Learning different languages

- Learning one language vs. learning a different language.
  - Linguistic relativity
  - Examples: colors, syntactic differences, gender
- Learning two languages simultaneously.
  - Will it slow down language development?
  - Will it hinder or aid intelligence?
  - Critical periods
Hemispheric differences in language processing

Adults who learned a second language at 1 to 3 years of age show the normal pattern of greater left-hemisphere activity in a test of grammatical knowledge. (Darker colors indicate greater activation.) Those who learned the language later show increased right-hemisphere activity. (Adapted from Neville & Bavelier, 1999)

Test of critical-period hypothesis

Performance on a test of English grammar of adults originally from Korea and China is directly related to the age at which they came to the United States and were exposed to English. The scores of adults who emigrated before the age of 7 are indistinguishable from those of native speakers of English. (Adapted from Johnson & Newport, 1989)
Why does this matter?

• Policy!
• How to “integrate” non-English-speaking children.
• How to teach languages more efficiently.

Best way to learn two (or more) languages

• Early exposure
• Simultaneous exposure
• Consistent contexts
• (little linguist demo)