

Age	Language
3 to 4 years	Simple but increasingly longer sentences. Grammar and sentence structuring starts to develop. Conversations show turn taking
4 years onwards	Increasingly complex sentences, structure and ordered conversation. Use of pronouns and auxiliary verbs
5 years onwards	Tell a short story that is meaningful.

B10

B10: Will learning a second language interfere with development in the first language?

The answer is no, definitely not. There may sometimes be some minor knots on the wood that are easily planed off over time. For example, mixing words from the two languages often temporarily occurs among children. Generally, becoming bilingual has positive effects on language development, including on the first language (see Glossary). For example, when learning two languages, the child may become more sensitive and aware of language itself. There may be more sensitivity in communication and more awareness of the needs of listeners. Having two (or more) words for each object, idea or concept will **expand** rather than contract the mind.



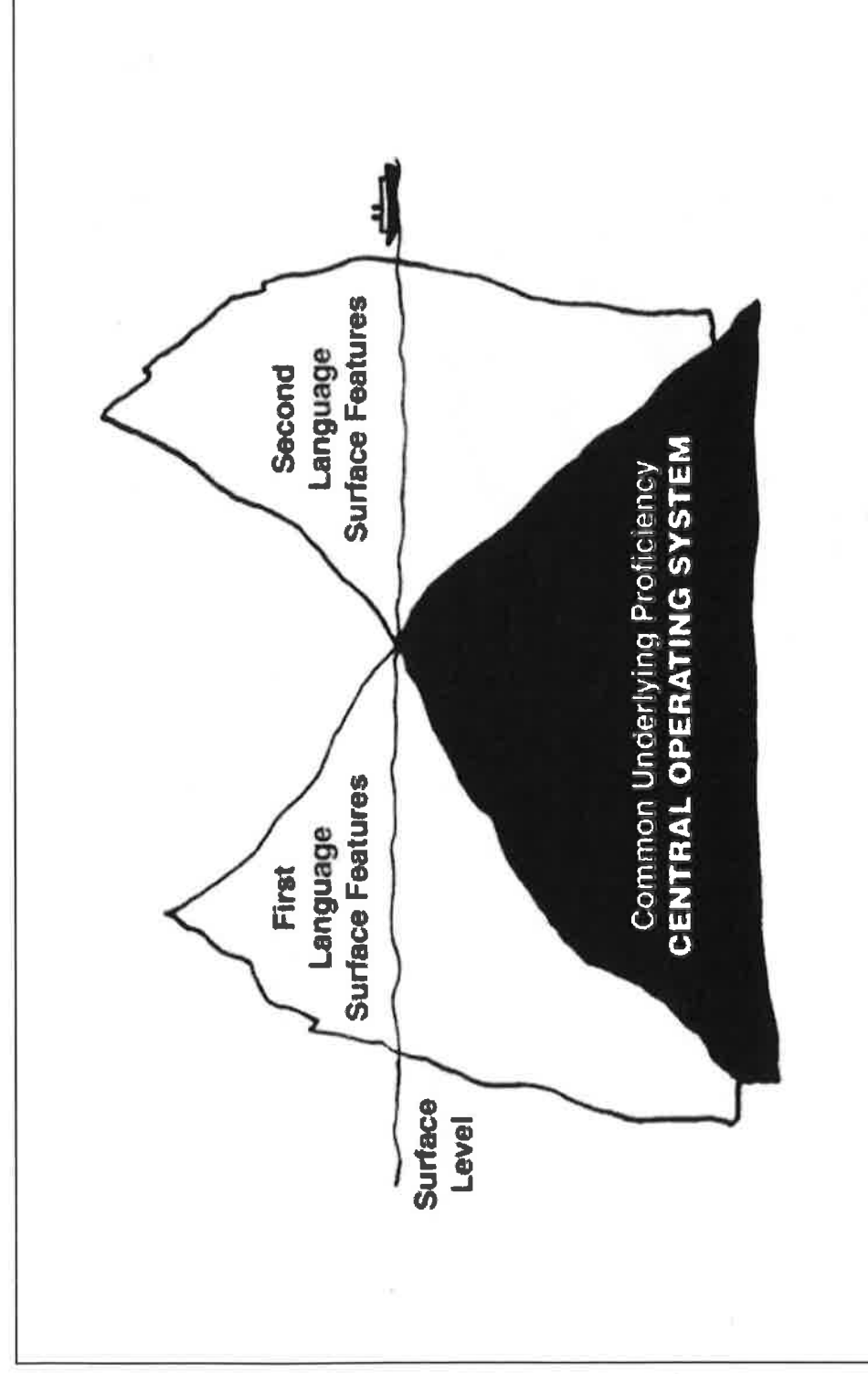
To the left is a picture of bilinguals that is **incorrect**. This picture is of someone with two **language balloons** in their head. In the picture, this incorrect idea of two languages is that they are stored within two separate language areas in the brain. The apparent assumption is that there is just enough room for one language inside the head. If one language is poured into that balloon, the mind will work maximally efficiently. If two languages are poured into the thinking quarters, the result will be two half-filled lan-

guage balloons. Such under filled language balloons in the bilingual will create an inefficient brain.

This 'two balloon' concept is wrong. First, there is more than enough room inside the thinking quarters for two or more languages. It seems impossible to set limits on the amount of learning, understanding and knowledge that a person can hold within their thinking quarters. Second, the picture is wrong because there is transfer between the two languages.

Take the example of children taught how to use a computer in one language. This does not have to be retaught in the second language. They immediately transfer an understanding into another language (so long as a child has the vocabulary to reproduce it in that second language). Thus, the two language balloons merge inside the thinking quarters. There is common thinking that can be serviced and supplied by both languages.

The incorrect balloon picture can be replaced by the picture of a dual iceberg. Two icebergs are separated above the waterline. A bilingual's two languages are separate when speaking (and on the 'exterior', separate when reading and writing). Below the surface of the water, they are fused. A bilingual's two languages are joined together beneath the surface in the operating area of the brain.



So, rather than a second language interfering with the development of the first language, it is more likely to provide thinking advantages, social and cultural advantages, even economic advantages in the long term.