At the age of five, a child has had a linguistic experience of approximately 22,000 hours, that being 12 hours per day or 84 hours per week (or exactly 21,840 hours). Imagine that every hour corresponds to a dollar deposited in a bank account. The unilingual child then has a "linguistic capital" of $22,000. A bilingual child has the same capital, but the capital is distributed in two bank accounts, one for each language, as shown in the graph above.

This should reassure those who fear that exposure to French will negatively affect English learning!

But the table also tells us why it is so important to promote and maximize the hours devoted to French, especially if the child is going to attend a Francophone school. This is because the critical threshold to really anchor language learning corresponds to one third of the time (Fred Genesee, McGill University).

At the age of five, the child has another year of opportunities for learning French before entering into the formal school system (Grade 1), where language is also used as a learning tool. According to the curve of the optimal age for learning a new language, a child at this age still has two years before brain plasticity begins to decrease.

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