



Myths and Realities: Best Practices for ESL Students

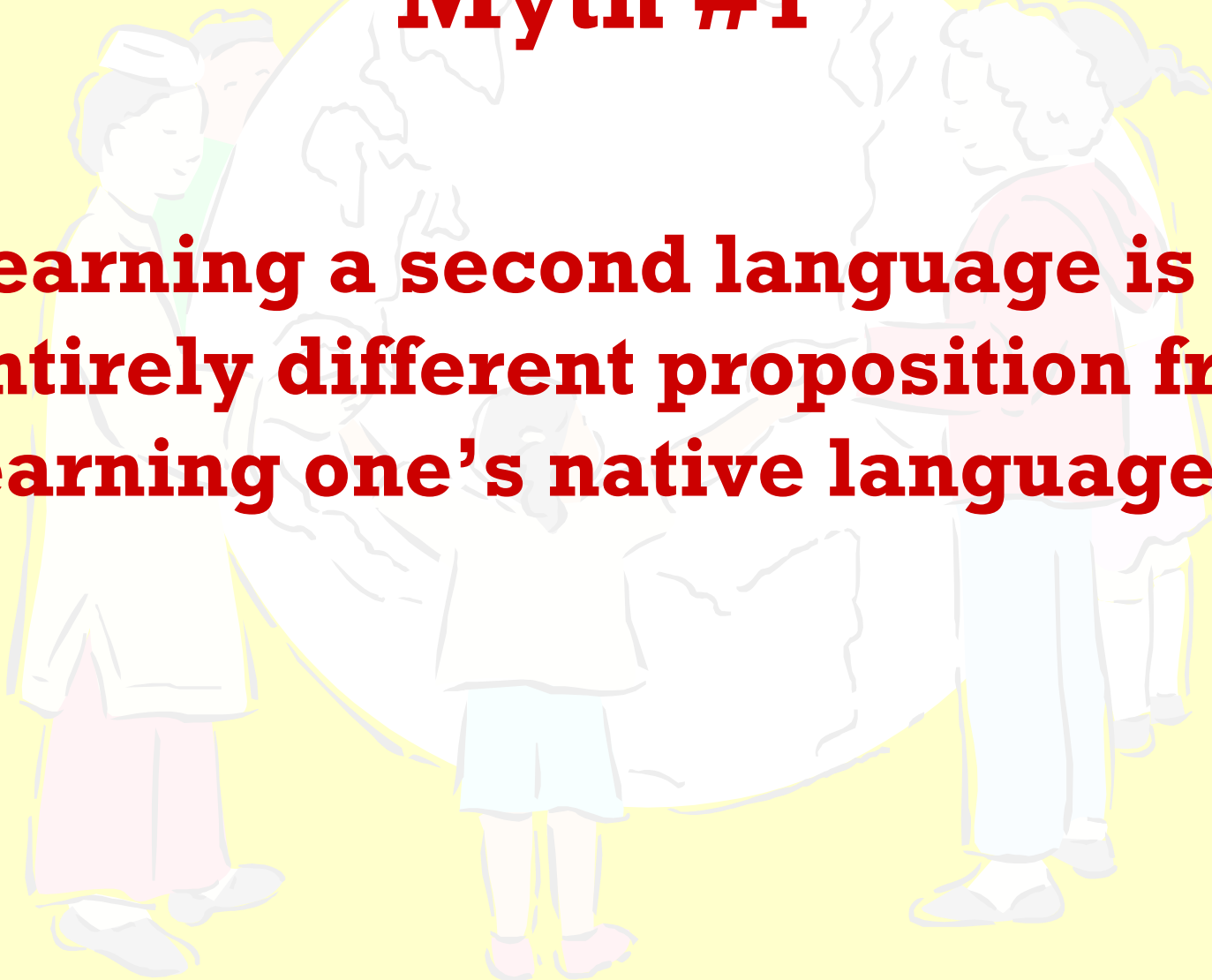
An illustration on a yellow background showing a group of diverse people of various ages and ethnicities holding hands in a circle around a large globe. The globe is the central focus, with the people's hands resting on its surface. The people are drawn in a simple, sketchy style with various colors for their clothing. The overall mood is one of global unity and community.

10 Myths and the Realities about ESL Students



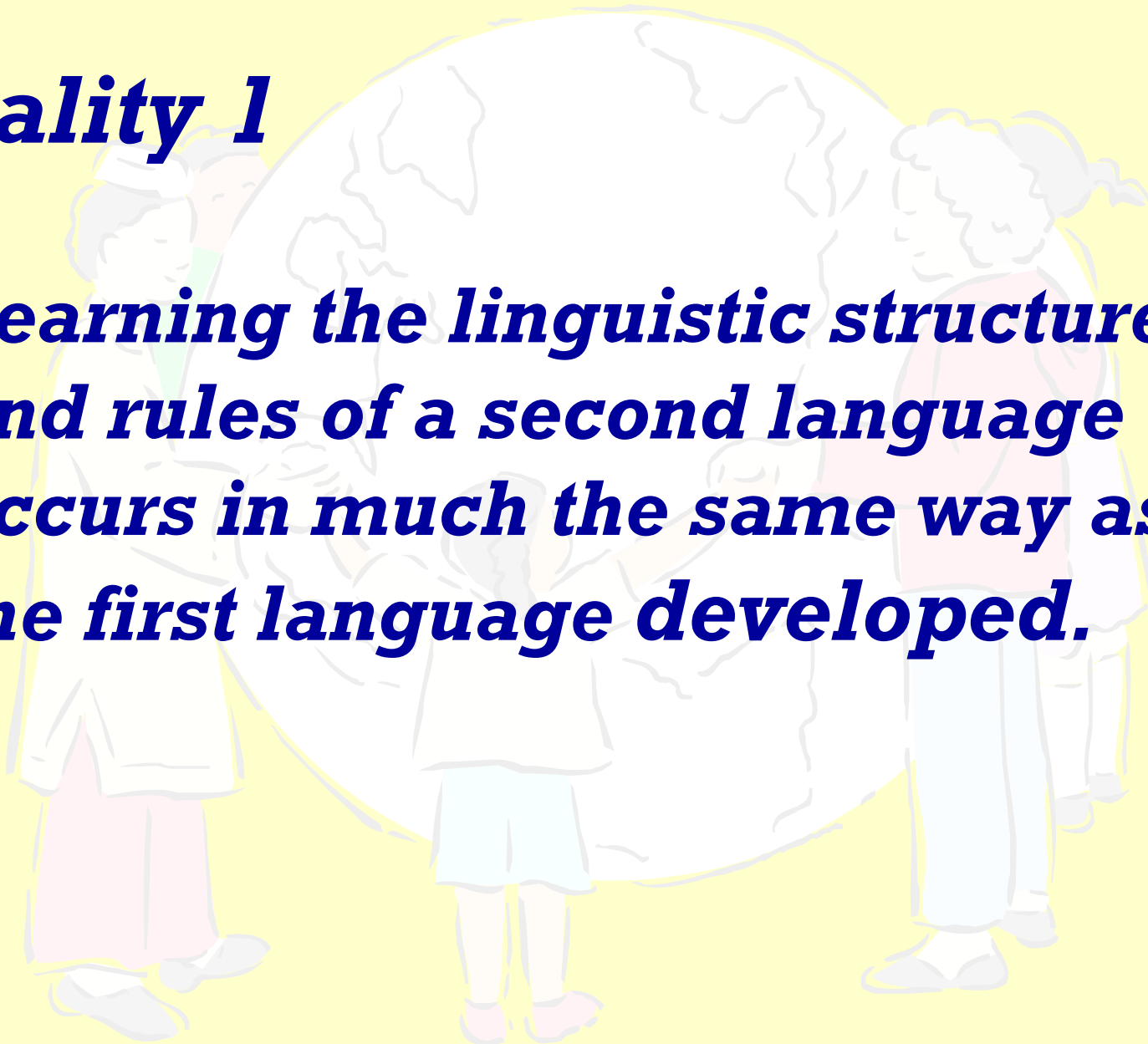
Myth #1

Learning a second language is an entirely different proposition from learning one's native language.



Reality 1

- ***Learning the linguistic structures and rules of a second language occurs in much the same way as the first language developed.***

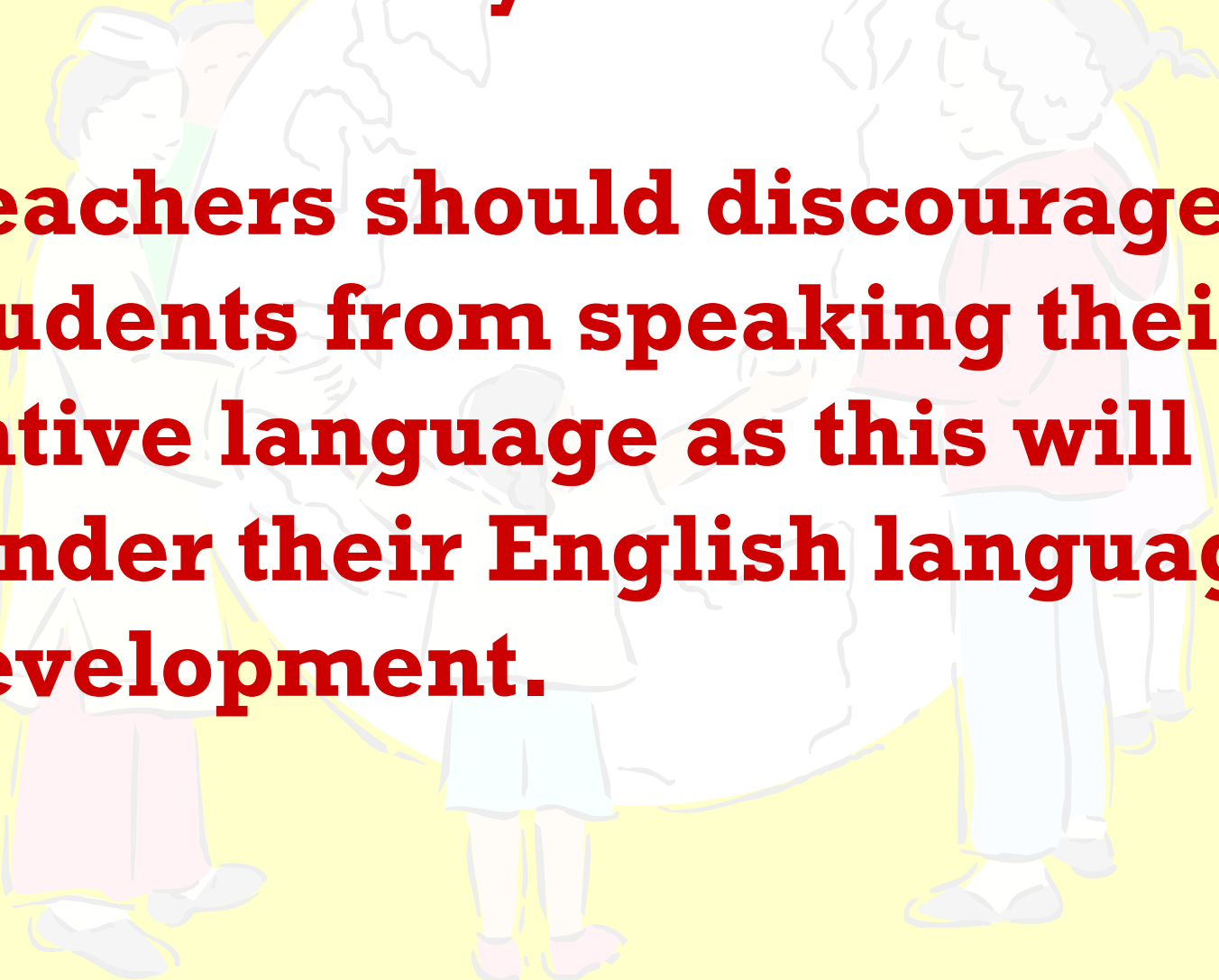


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- An illustration on a yellow background showing a large globe in the center. Several stylized human figures are gathered around the globe, some pointing at it. The figures are drawn with simple outlines and some are filled with light colors like pink, blue, and green. The overall style is clean and modern.
- ***However, learning a second language takes time and requires support.***



Myth #2

Teachers should discourage students from speaking their native language as this will hinder their English language development.

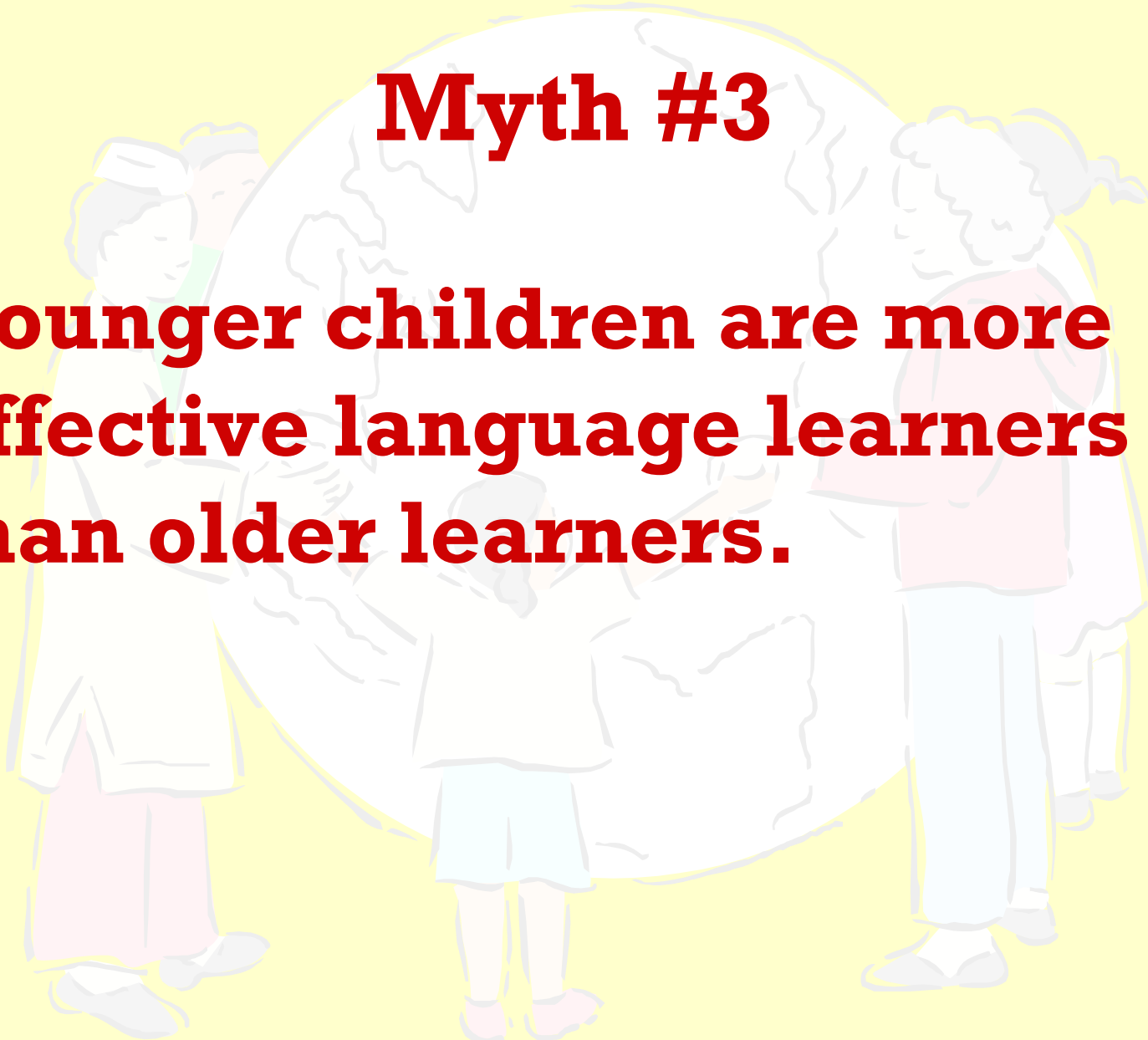


Reality 2

- ***Using their native language facilitates cognitive and academic growth.***
 - ***Speaking their native language with their parents is important and should be respected and encouraged.***
 - ***Bilingualism is an asset to the individual and the community and should be encouraged.***
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Myth #3

Younger children are more effective language learners than older learners.

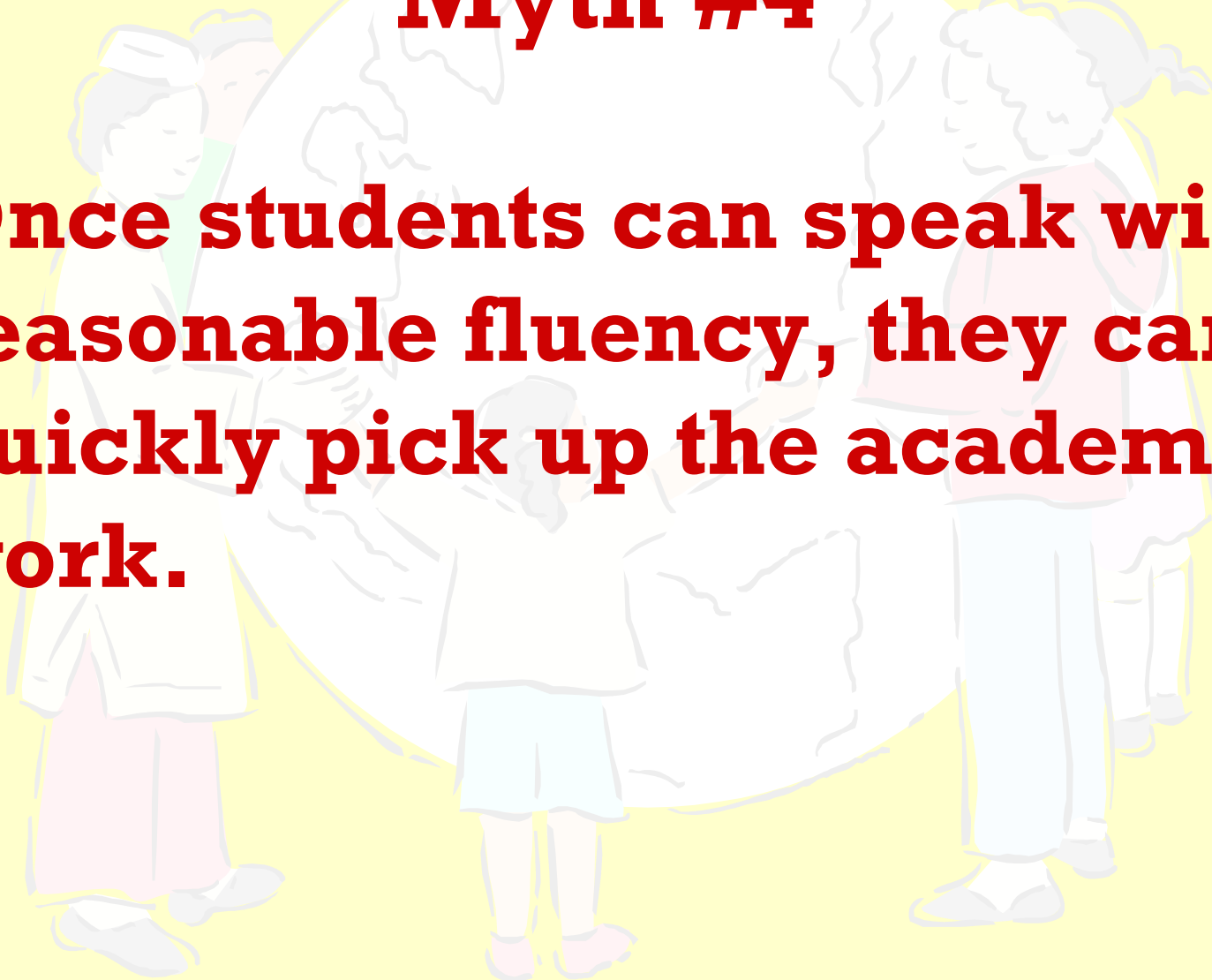


Reality 3

- ***While younger language learners may learn to pronounce a new language with little or no accent, older language learners are often much more efficient learners.***
 - ***Language expectations for younger learners are generally lower than for older students.***
 - ***School language is more complex and less contextualized at higher grades, making language acquisition challenging.***
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Myth #4

Once students can speak with reasonable fluency, they can quickly pick up the academic work.

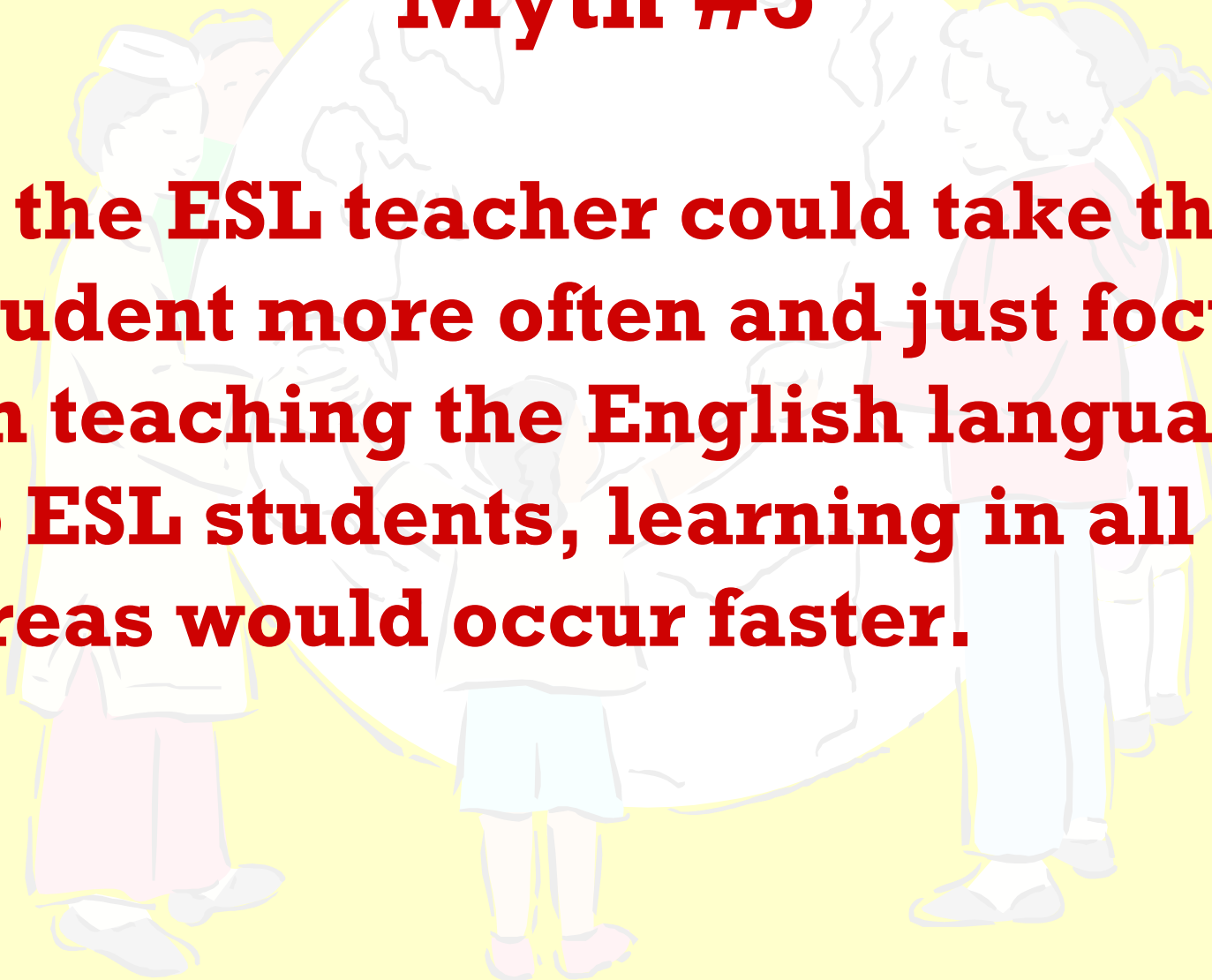


Reality 4

- ***Social language, called BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills), is generally acquired within 2 years of immersion.***
 - ***However, CALPS (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency Skills) take many years to develop.***
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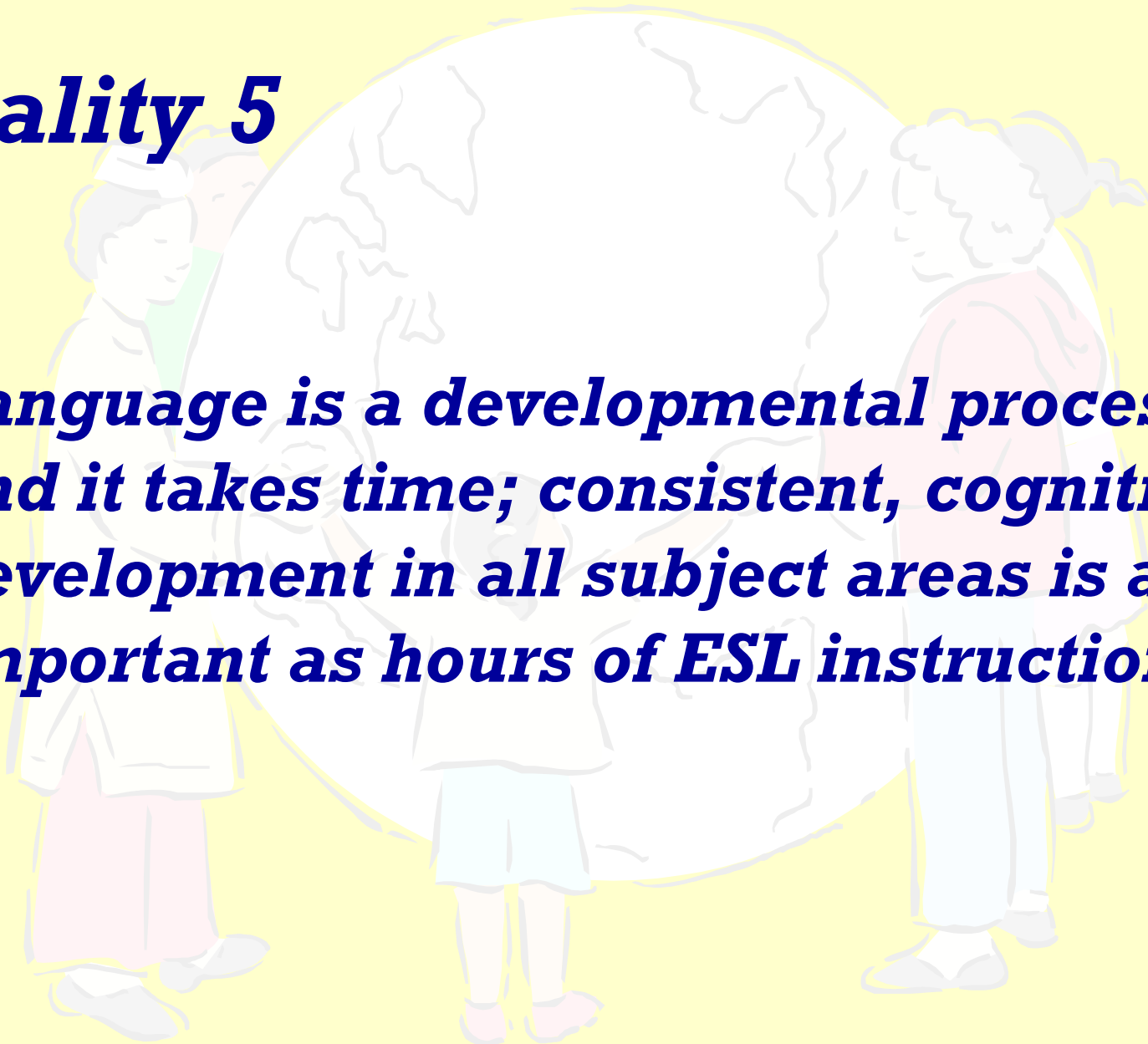
Myth #5

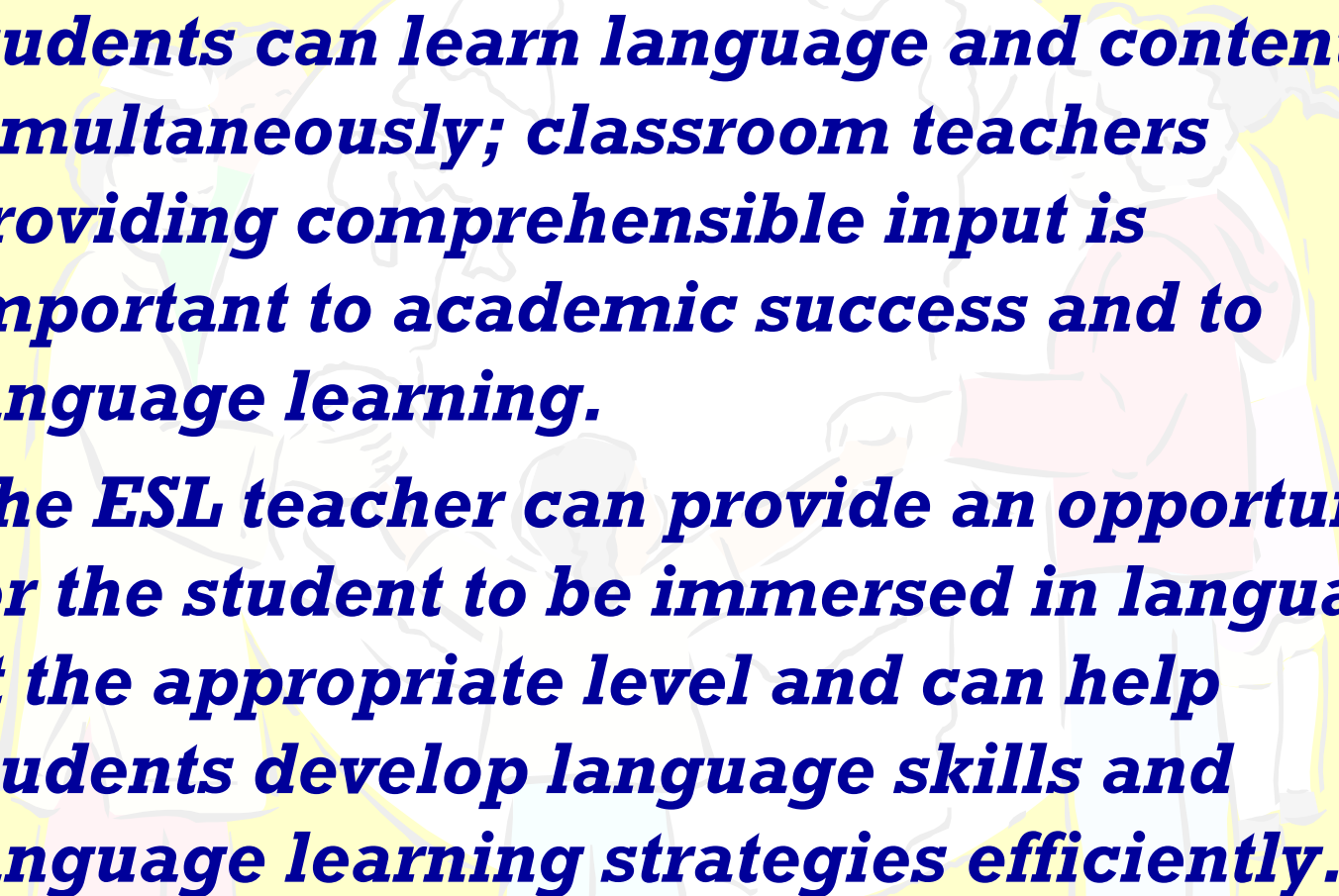
If the ESL teacher could take the student more often and just focus on teaching the English language to ESL students, learning in all areas would occur faster.



Reality 5

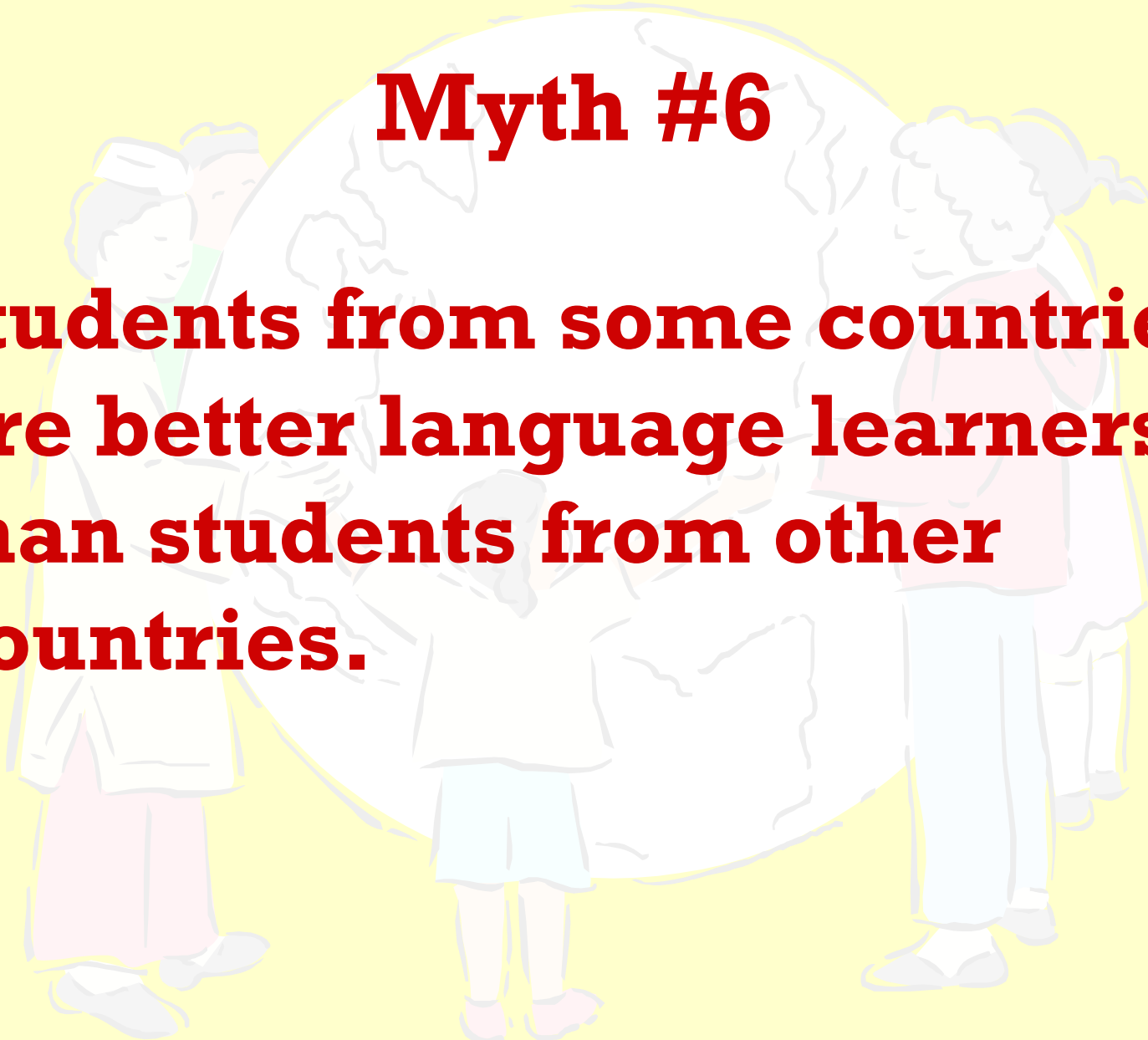
- ***Language is a developmental process and it takes time; consistent, cognitive development in all subject areas is as important as hours of ESL instruction.***



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- The background features a faint, stylized illustration of a globe in the upper center. Below the globe, there are three children: a girl on the left in a pink dress, a girl in the middle in a light blue dress, and a boy on the right in a red shirt and white pants. The entire scene is set against a light yellow background.
- ***Students can learn language and content simultaneously; classroom teachers providing comprehensible input is important to academic success and to language learning.***
 - ***The ESL teacher can provide an opportunity for the student to be immersed in language at the appropriate level and can help students develop language skills and language learning strategies efficiently.***
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Myth #6

Students from some countries are better language learners than students from other countries.

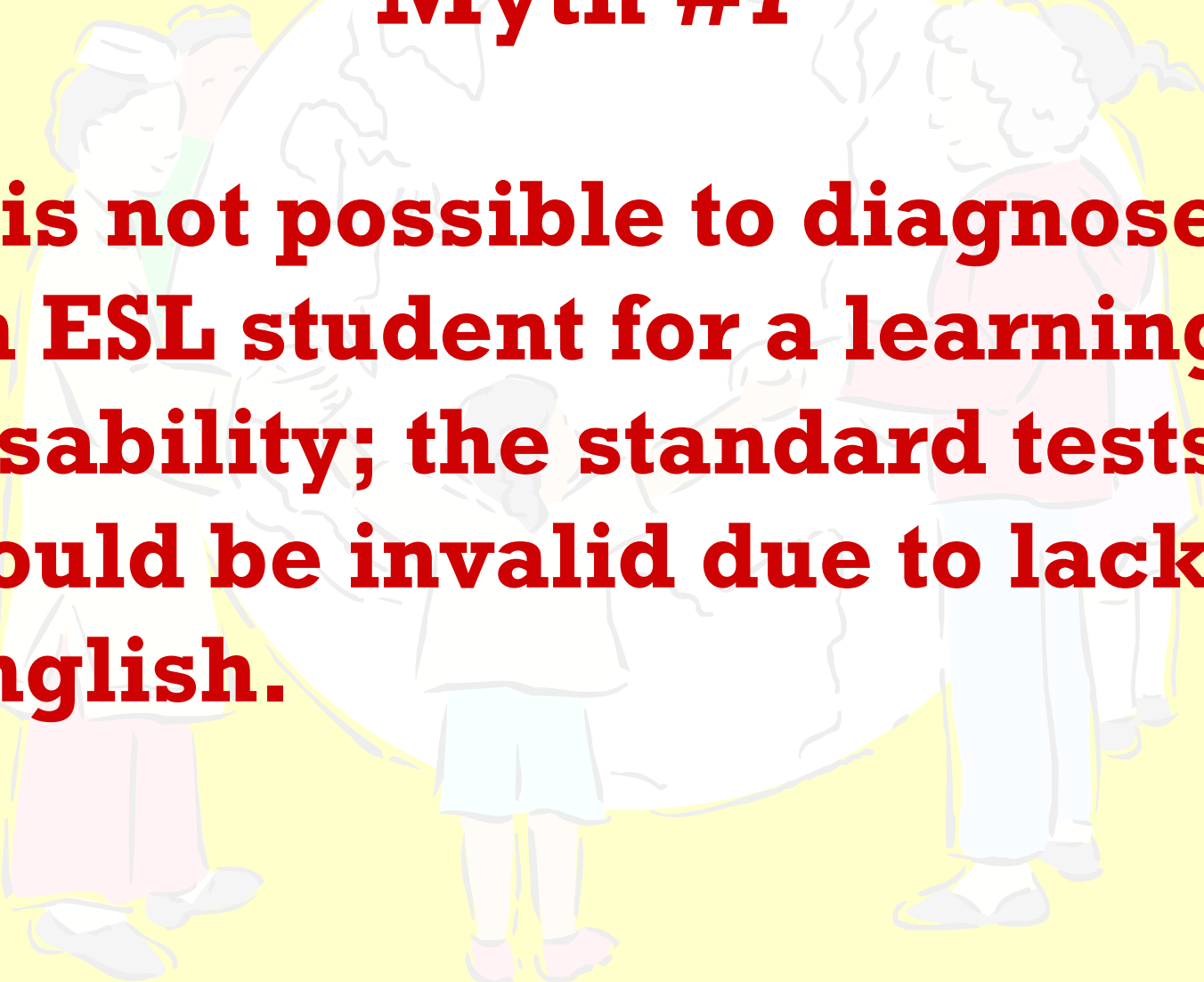


Reality 6

- ***Students from all language and cultural backgrounds are equally capable of learning English; neither success in language learning nor academic success can be attributed to the student's country of origin, but rather to a variety of social, emotional and cognitive factors, as well as first language literacy.***
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Myth #7

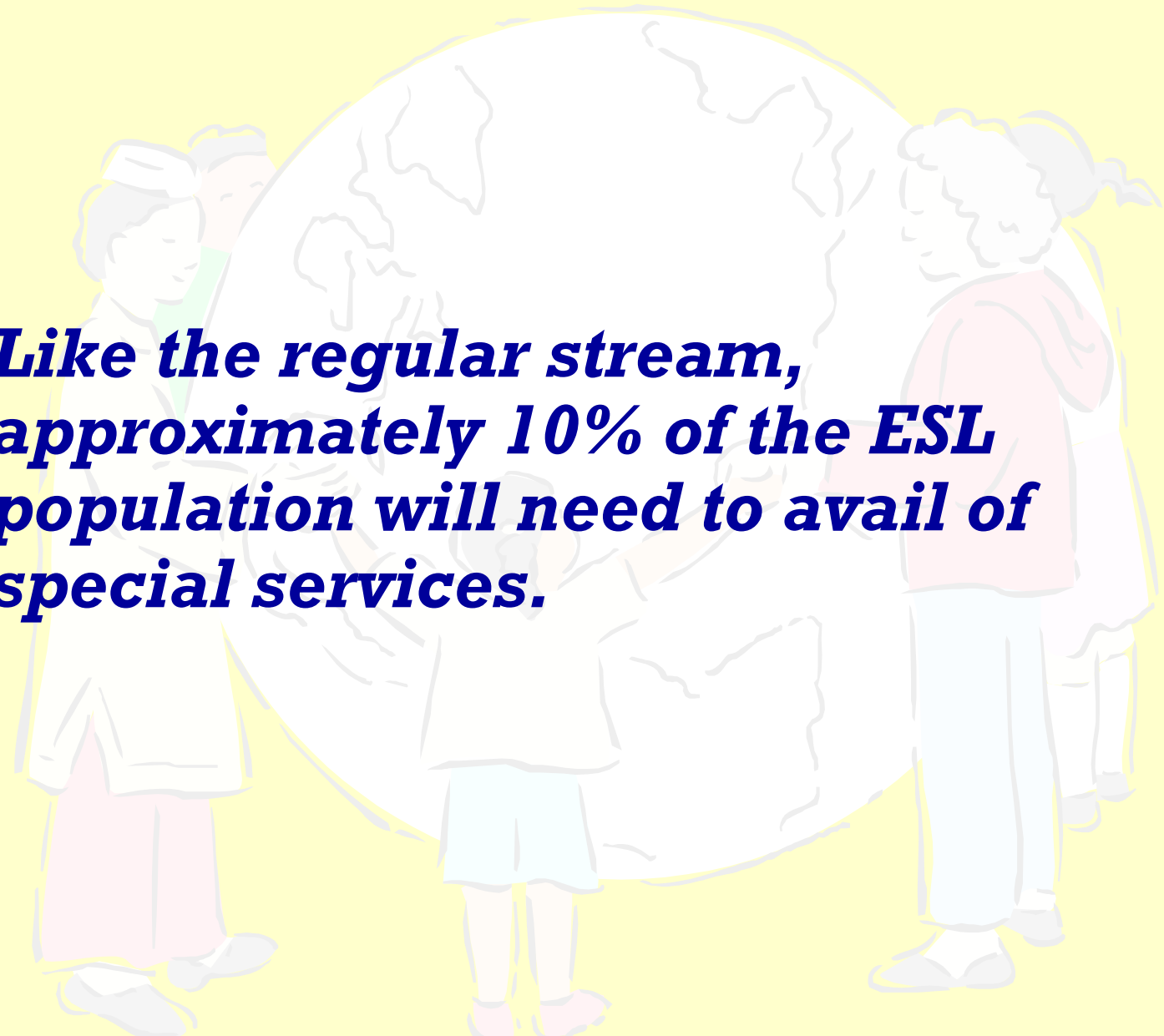
It is not possible to diagnose an ESL student for a learning disability; the standard tests would be invalid due to lack of English.



Reality 7

The background features a light yellow gradient. In the center, there is a faint, stylized illustration of a globe. Overlaid on the globe are three stylized human figures: a woman on the left, a child in the middle, and another woman on the right. The figures are rendered in a simple, sketchy style with soft colors like pink, green, and blue.

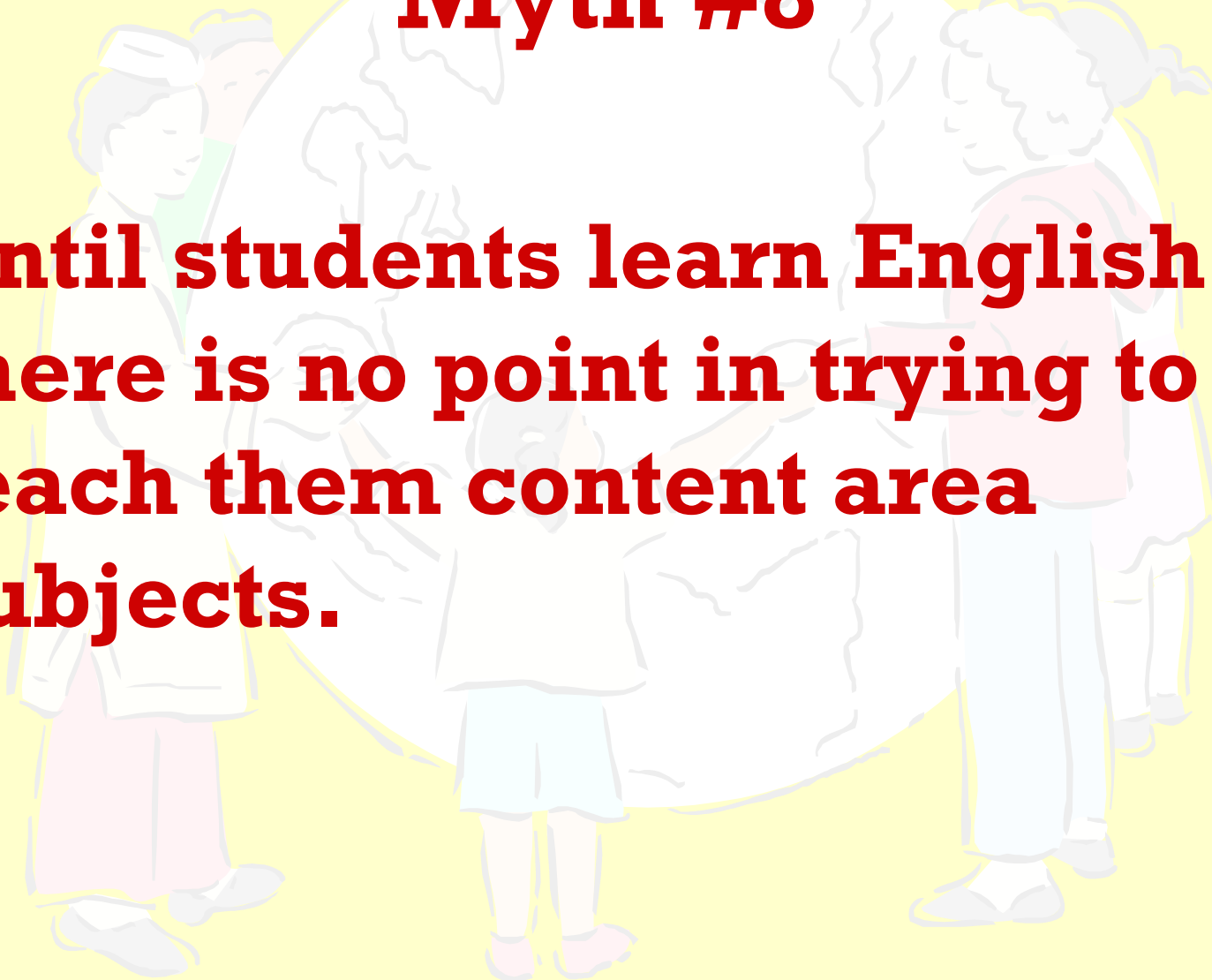
- ***Although some traditional tests may be invalid, there are a number of alternate ways to diagnose an ESL child.***
 - ***Some of these ways would be non-verbal testing, comparative studies, observation and input from all involved teachers, specialists and parents.***
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- An illustration of a globe in the center, surrounded by several stylized human figures of various ethnicities and ages. The figures are drawn with simple outlines and flat colors. The background is a solid light yellow. The text is overlaid on the globe and figures.
- ***Like the regular stream, approximately 10% of the ESL population will need to avail of special services.***



Myth #8

**Until students learn English,
there is no point in trying to
teach them content area
subjects.**

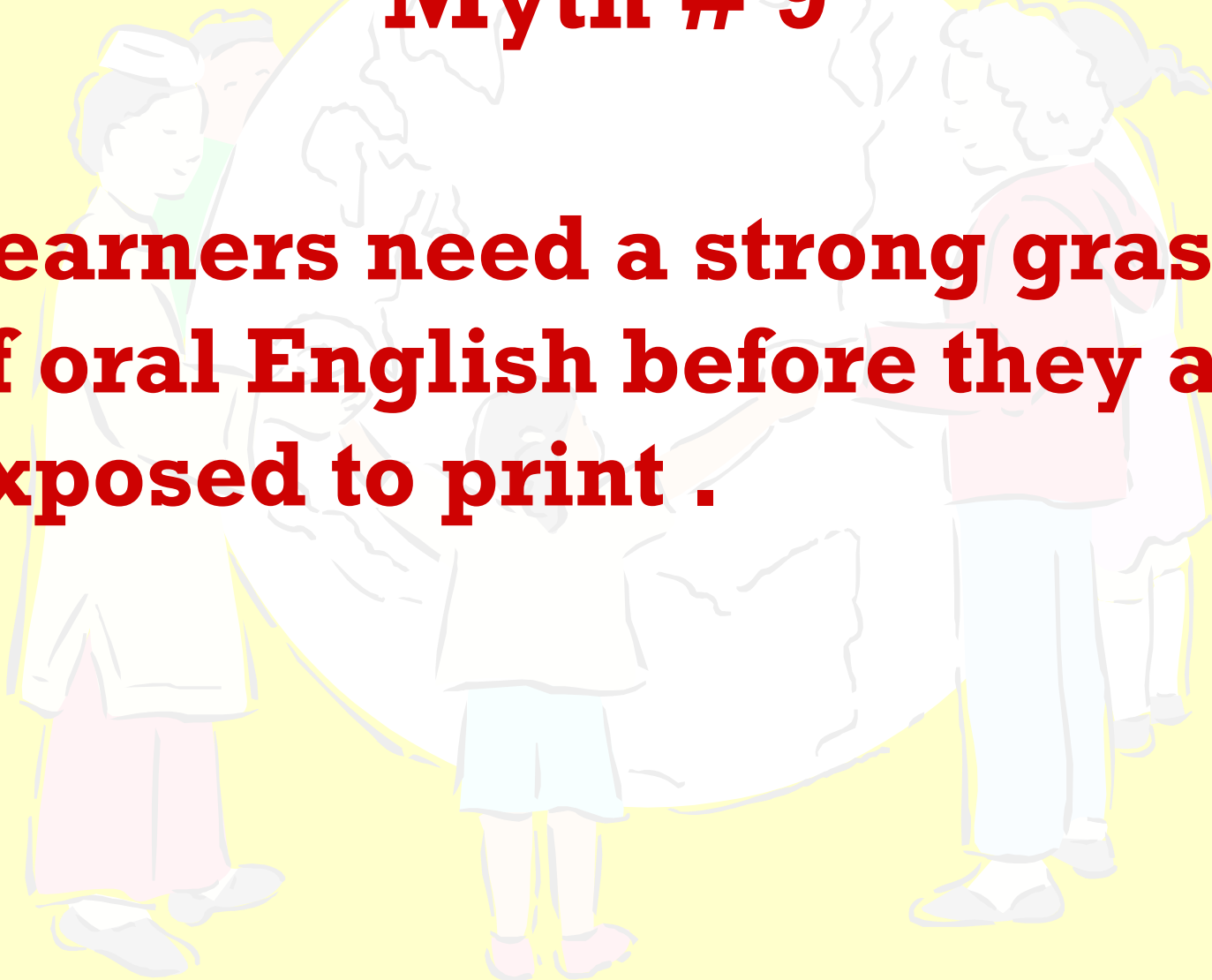


Reality 8

- ***ESL students need to continue their content education.***
 - ***It is possible and desirable to teach ESL students various subject matter while they are acquiring English.***
 - ***One of the recognized ways to learn a language is to be taught content in the target language by teachers who use good teaching strategies.***
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Myth # 9

Learners need a strong grasp of oral English before they are exposed to print .

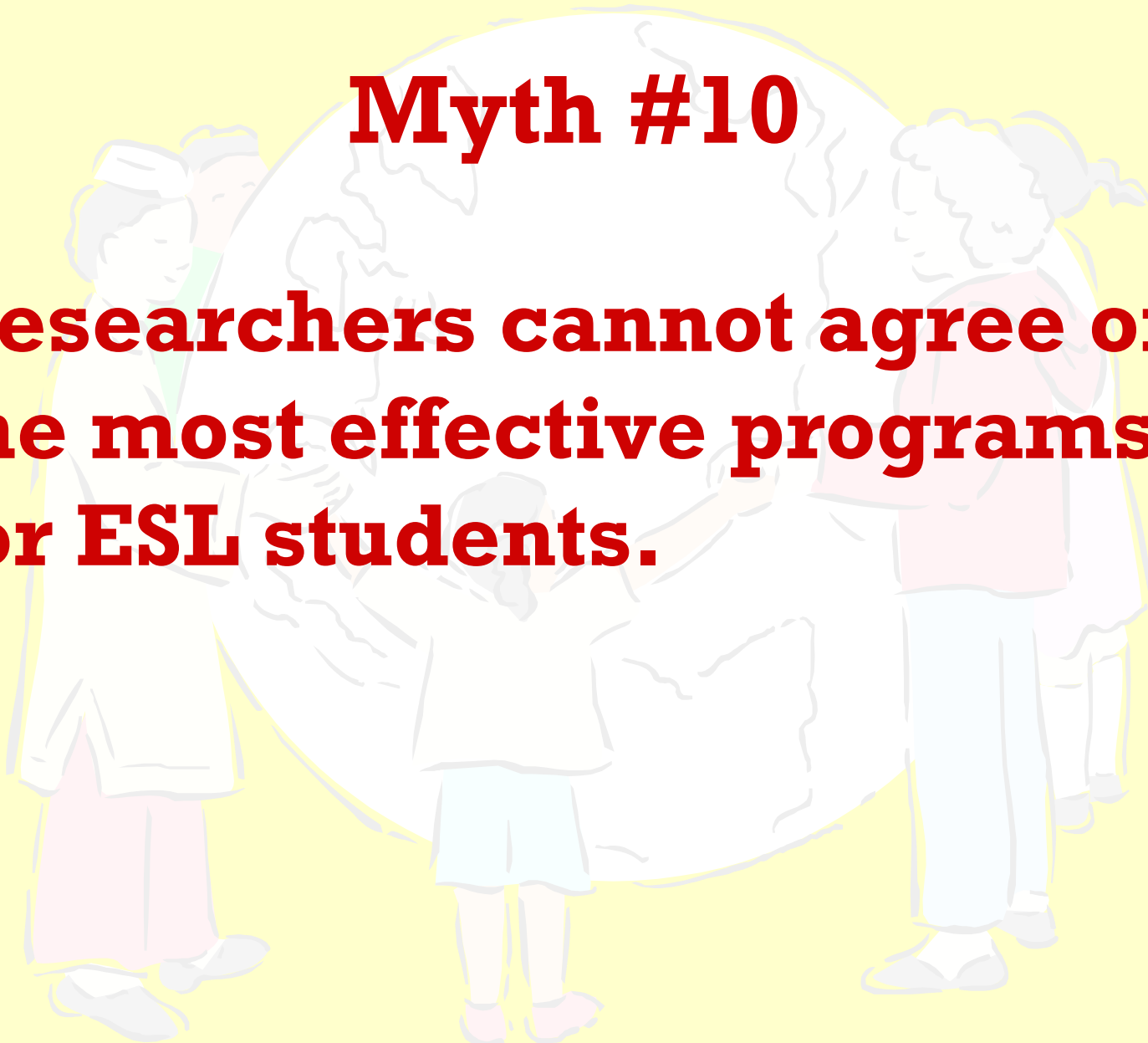


Reality 9

- ***ESL learners should be exposed to a rich print environment from early on in their English learning.***
 - ***Students who are literate in their first language can use reading and writing as a means of learning English.***
 - ***Students who are not literate in their first language need oral language development along with reading and writing readiness skills.***
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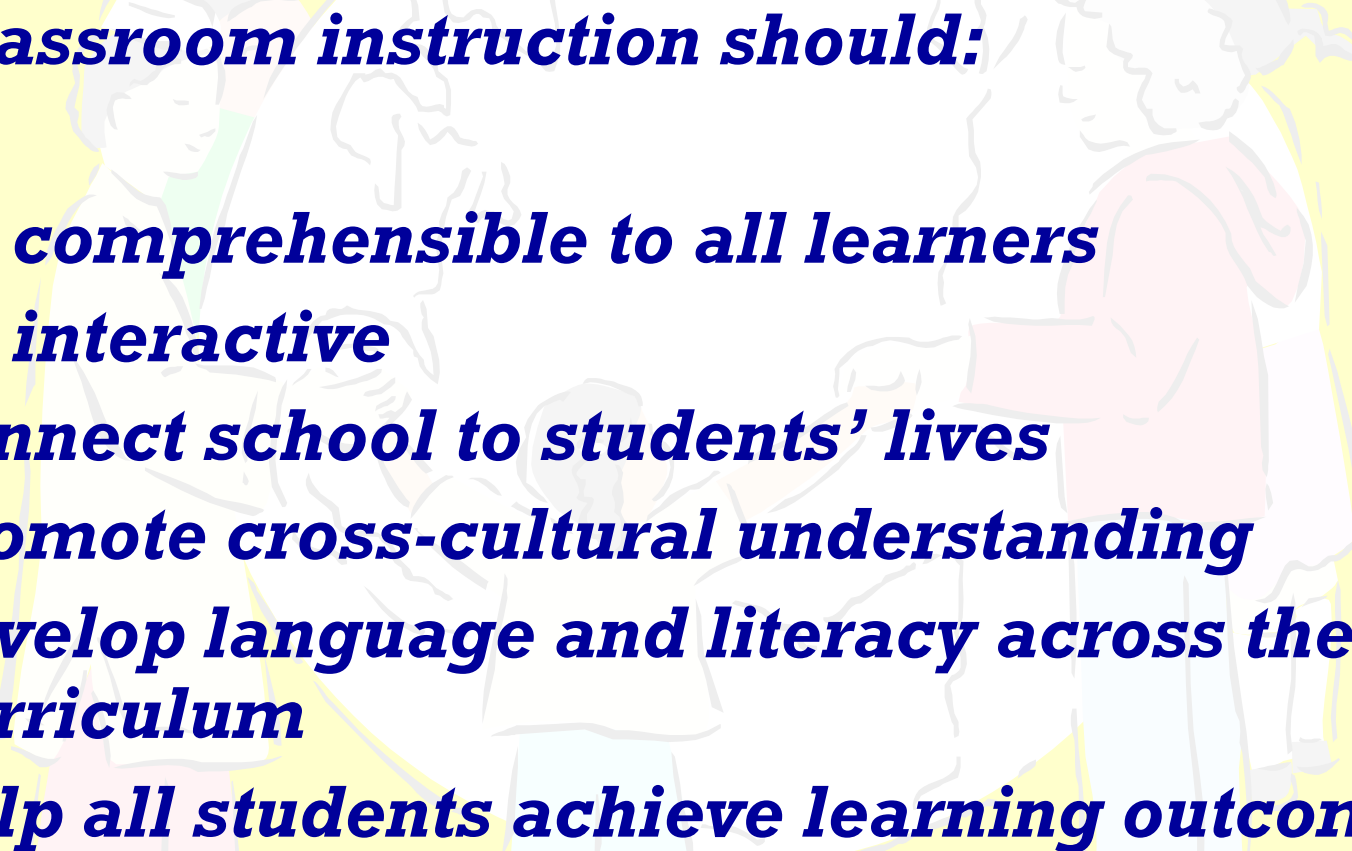
Myth #10

Researchers cannot agree on the most effective programs for ESL students.



Reality 10


- ***Based on the literature, an effective ESL program:***
 - ***values the cultural identity of the student***
 - ***has high expectations for ESL students***
 - ***integrates language and content***
 - ***provides ongoing PD for ESL and content teachers***
 - ***supports whole school inclusion***
 - ***promotes collaboration among teachers***
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- A stylized illustration of a globe in the background, with several people of diverse ethnicities holding hands in a circle in front of it. The people are rendered in simple, colorful outlines. The background is a solid light yellow color.
- ***Classroom instruction should:***
 - ***be comprehensible to all learners***
 - ***be interactive***
 - ***connect school to students' lives***
 - ***promote cross-cultural understanding***
 - ***develop language and literacy across the curriculum***
 - ***help all students achieve learning outcomes***
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An illustration on a yellow background showing a group of people of various ages holding hands in a circle around a large globe. The globe is the central focus, with the text 'Questions? Comments?' overlaid on it. The people include a woman in a white lab coat and pink skirt on the left, a child in a white shirt and blue skirt in the foreground, and a woman in a red shirt and blue pants on the right. Other figures are partially visible behind them.

Questions? Comments ?





The Department of Education thanks the working group that created the series of presentations on working with ESL and immigrant students:

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