
Bilingual Basics

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2.25.08

The more, the better.

The sooner, the better

The faster, the better

The harder, the better

The louder, the better.

Often, it seems that ~this~ is what the public seems to understand about second language acquisition—turns out, it's not true. If we want children to speak English, and we do, we do not have to give more, sooner, faster, harder, and louder. Because of this public (mis)understanding, each of us is often called upon to explain language acquisition, ESL, ELD, sheltered, SDAIE, and the multiple approaches to bilingual education to immersion. No wonder the public doesn't understand. In what follows are some of user-friendly, non academic-ese ways of sharing our knowledge, depending on the audience and the context.

Bilingual Basics

English is the primary goal of bilingual education.

Bilingual education is all about *literacy* and *knowledge*.

The truth is that we can all stop worrying about the kids not getting conversational English. They're all doing it. We can't stop them. However, conversational English alone is not the answer. Our job, as teachers, is to focus on academic language.

Kids can't learn what they don't understand. Me either.

Knowing your first language really well makes learning the second easier and faster.

Lots of first language literacy is a great indicator of success in school.

Poverty is a great roadblock to literacy and knowledge; our job is to level the playing field while the kids are with us in school.

People around the world feel strongly about their first language. And, why not? It is how we all originally received love from our parents and families. It is okay to love your first language. It is okay for everyone to love the first language.

Being bilingual is not bad. In fact, it is very good.

Students must be prepared for a world we can only imagine. Students need to be able to pose problems and solve programs with technology, which stretches beyond our wildest thoughts. Being able to do this in more than one language will be an advantage.

Above all, students who will succeed socially and economically are those who can thrive in a multilingual world. And, when that day comes, it will still be okay for each of us to have strong feeling about our first language.

Benefits of Bilingualism

- Effective in fighting the negative mental decline in the aging process
 - Increases intelligence
 - Stimulates creativity
 - Promotes cognitive flexibility
 - Fosters divergent thinking
 - Facilitates high levels of mental-linguistic and mental-cultural awareness
 - Enables faster and more efficient learning of other languages
 - Heightens sensitivity to feedback cues and general verbal communication
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Resources

Thomas, W.P. & Collier, V.P. (2003). The multiple benefits of dual language. *Educational Leadership*, 61(2), October 2003.

Collier, V.P., & Thomas, W.P. (2004). The astounding effectiveness of dual language education for all. *NABE Journal of Research and Practice*, 2(1), 1-20. Retrieved May 15, 2007, from <http://njrp.tamu.edu/2004.htm>. (Also available from, <http://njrp.tamu.edu/2004/PDFs/Collier.pdf>)

Bialystok, E., Craik, F., Klein, R., and Viswanathan, 2004. Bilingualism, aging, and cognitive control: Evidence from the Simon task. *Psychology and Aging*, 19(2): 290-303.

Ellen Bialystok and her colleagues have done studies showing that bilinguals are better than monolinguals at solving problems that require ignoring irrelevant information and focusing just on important information. Bilinguals also have superior “working memories,” that is, they are better at keeping information in their memories while solving a problem. These are both abilities that decline in older people, but Bialystok and colleagues have shown that bilinguals show less of a decline; bilingualism, in other words, might reduce some of the negative effects of aging.

Gold, N. (2006) *Successful Bilingual Schools: Six Effective Programs in California*. San Diego: San Diego County Office of Education. 64 pp. Retrieved May 15, 2007, from http://www.sdcoe.net/lret2/els/pdf/SBS_Report_FINAL.pdf

Garner, R. (2006, October 31). Bilingual pupils do better in exams, report finds. *The Independent*. Retrieved May 15, 2007, from <http://education.independent.co.uk/news/article1943292.ece>

CAL, Center for Applied Linguistics
Directory of Two-Way Bilingual Immersion, Retrieved May 1, 2007, from <http://www.cal.org/jsp/TWI/SchoolListings.jsp>

Lindholm-Leary, K. (2007). Got bilingualism?: Spanish and Chinese Immersion students' perceptions of bilingualism and biculturalism. *CABE 2007*, Long Beach, CA. Retrieved May 15, 2007, from http://www.lindholm-leary.com/present&handout/CABE2007_FeatureSpeaker_StudentAtt.pdf

Lindholm-Leary, K. (2006, Dec.). Making great gains in dual language: Longitudinal Research on secondary students. *30th Annual Illinois Statewide Conference for Teachers of Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Students*. Retrieved May 17, 2006, from http://www.lindholm-leary.com/present&handout/IllinoisConf2006_MakingGains.pdf

Greene, J. (1997). A Meta-Analysis of the Effectiveness of Bilingual Education Effective Reading Programs for English Language Learners: A Best-Evidence Synthesis. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 21(2,3), 103-122. In a recent review of research on the effectiveness of bilingual education, Greene concluded that the use of the native language in instruction English learners has beneficial effects and that “efforts to eliminate the use of the native language in instruction. . . harm children by denying them access to beneficial approaches” (p. 115).

Thomas, W., & Collier, V. (2002). *A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement*. Santa Cruz, CA and Washington, DC: Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.

http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/research/llaa/1.1_final.html

Thomas, W., & Collier, V. (2002). *A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement*. Santa Cruz, CA and Washington, DC: Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.

Stephen D. Krashen has repeatedly summarized the research by stating that children in well-implemented bilingual education programs typically acquire English faster, and at worst, do just as well as those in all-English programs, even though non-native speakers of English enter programs with less English and higher rates of poverty. Properly organized bilingual education programs use the first language in ways that accelerate and facilitate second language development.

Steve D. Krashen generously shares all of his work at www.sdkrashen.com

Prepared May 2007 by Joan Wink as a brief overview of the effectiveness of good bilingual programs. A complete summary of the research is available as an annotated bibliography at the end of chapter six of *Teaching Passionately: What's Love Got To Do With It?* (2004) by Joan Wink and Dawn Wink, available at www.JoanWink.com; just click on the book cover icon.

Retrieved May 15, 2007, from www.joanwink.com/scheditems/bilingualbasics.pdf
Updated October 22, 2007
