

Role of the Home Language in International Schools and Classrooms

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In the past, in many international and other bilingual classrooms, there has been a perceived need for discouraging the use of students' home language during instruction in English, their L2.

Allowing the use of both languages is going to favor the more proficient language, typically the home language. This is especially true when the home language is the language of the majority and the language of power in the larger society (for example, an international school in Germany with many German speakers)

...But is it the same inside the school?

- In English-speaking countries, Canada e.g., research does show more English language use by learners in French immersion programs in later grades and shows a decrease in the accuracy of pronunciation and correct usage of French around fourth grade (LaVan, 2001; Tarone & Swain, 1995).

When we use the home language more frequently, we are decreasing the opportunity to use (and develop) the second language, English.

When we use a language for certain purposes and not others, we implicitly assign a certain status to that language.

Understanding the benefits of making connections between L1 and L2 is linked to two key concepts:

"cross-linguistic transfer"
and
"metalinguistic awareness."

Cross-Linguistic Transfer

Cross-linguistic transfer occurs when

specific knowledge and skills in one language are used in another language:

rich as "reach"

Library (for bookstore)

strap as "estrap"

When go to school

helper as "jelper"

I don't know nothing

general strategies from one language are used to figure out the meanings of new words or to comprehend text in the other language.

- **Swan, M. & Smith, B. (eds.) Learner English: A Teacher's Guide to Interference and Other Problems (2nd Edition) (Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers)**

Capitalizing on Cross-Linguistic Transfer to Promote Metalinguistic Awareness

For students to transfer knowledge from their home language to using the second language, it helps to have an awareness of the two languages; they must understand how the two languages represent sound and meaning and the similarities and differences in the ways they do this.

Aspects of word learning that depend on "metalinguistic awareness":

- Word consciousness—Awareness of and interest in words and their meanings; understanding why some words are used instead of others and the power of words.
- Using parts of words to unlock their meanings—Using word roots, prefixes, and suffixes to figure out the meaning of new words; for example, words that begin with *in* or *un* often refer to the lack of something, like *incomplete* or *unsure*.
- Using *cognates* (words that are identical or almost identical in two languages and which have the same or highly similar meaning) to figure out word meanings.

Cognates: A sizable fraction of English vocabulary is cognate with other languages, for example, Spanish, Italian and German!

English	Spanish	Italian	German
admire	admirar	ammirare	
agent	agente	agente	agent
appear	aparecer	apparire	
atmosphere	atmósfera	atmosfera	atmosphäre
biography	biografia	biografia	biografie
brilliant	brillante	brillante	brillant
catastrophe	catástrofe	catastrofe	katastrophe
cholera	cólera	colera	cholera
contagious	contagioso(a)	contagioso(a)	

PREMISE 1:

All students can benefit from being encouraged (or asked explicitly) to engage in cross-linguistic comparisons.

The bridge is the period during the lesson or unit where the focus is on instructing students in how to transfer what they have learned and stored in one language into the other language.

Dedicate time at the end of each lesson to cross-linguistic transfer.

Beeman & Urow, 2013

The Bridge allows for bootstrapping, using home-language proficiency to build second language proficiency and vice versa

Mini lessons

Teach strategies that would be particularly helpful with common "mistakes" that are sure to arise, like "Always pronounce the h in the beginning of words in English (since /h/ is silent in Spanish)."

Point out, or ask about, parallels between the two languages

Point out, or ask about, contrasts

Eventually, students can investigate similarities and differences in their two languages themselves

• extract as many cognates as we can from the reading on p. 28 (metamorphosis)

• identify

Metaphor

Adjective

growth in ...

• prefixes des-/dis- and ...

opposite" in both languages (ac-

descansar, desconocer; disagree, dislike,

dissimilar)

Cross-Linguistic Objectives (Bridging)

1. Compare the terms for standard measurement units across languages.
2. Show similarities and differences in how the plural form works in Spanish and English.
3. Compare how English makes comparatives and superlatives with how Spanish does so (longer, longest vs. más largo).

i.e.:

i.e. Insecto/Insect,

i.e. of

PREMISE 2

All students can benefit from being able to complete part of their classroom activities in their more proficient language.

Students work individually or in groups to complete an activity. They can use whatever language they would like while working on the task, but they produce the final product in the language of instruction.

PREMISE 3

All students can benefit from being surrounded by good bilingual resources.

- write books in both languages
- create a home-language version of a book in the second language or vice versa

ACTIVITIES WITH BILINGUAL BOOKS:

- analyze bilingual books
- pre-learning: read a book in one language, learn the concept in the other language
- post-learning: learn the concept in one language, check in the other language to see if you learned it

Premise 4

All students need to go to the foreign language classroom and find a little piece of home in it.

- Family newsletter
- Recipes from home
- References to the home country
- Newspaper or magazine articles in the home language

Strategies for integrating the use of both languages:

1. Dedicate time at the end of each lesson to cross-linguistic transfer: Planning for the Bridge.

Include cross-linguistic objectives in your lesson or unit plan.

2. Encourage students to process, learn through their home language, but produce in English.
3. Encourage students to work with bilingual texts.
4. Incorporate students' home cultures into instruction and teach the unfamiliar language through familiar customs and values.

The key:

Although it is very tempting to use the students' more proficient language when we need to get a message across quickly and efficiently, and although we need to take advantage of the transfer that occurs between languages, and encourage students to use all their language resources, we need to control the use of the home language very carefully.

Let the languages of learning rely on and feed one another (in the learner), but keep the languages of instruction (produced by the teacher) separate.

Using the students' home languages in the school

Make the majority of the visuals and signs on the walls in the hallways in the various home languages

Make announcements in these languages

Celebrate student achievements in these languages

Invite authors, scientists etc. from the various home languages as featured speakers

Encourage bilingual teachers to use their home languages in the hallways and playground

Provide home language versions of school newsletter

Hold recitals, plays, presentations in home languages

Offer language classes in a few home languages to the school community

...Before we say adios...

Does what we talked about today suggest any strategies that are different from what you already do? How?

One thing you will do or think about doing as a result of what we talked about today.

2նորհակալեմ, شكراً, Thank you, Merci, Danke, Gracias
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- the language contains no errors
- the language is not too formal
- the language is not artificial
- the cultural context is authentic to the story
- the quality of the type is adequate
- the print quality is adequate—the colors, images, and words are sharp and well defined
- the binding can withstand classroom use.

In addition, in translated books, check to determine whether:

- the translation represents the original well
- words or phrases in the illustrations are in the appropriate language
- photographs and illustrations are culturally appropriate for the story so that there is a good fit between pictures and text.

In addition, in bilingual books, check to determine whether:

- the two languages are printed in the same size and quality font
- at least in some of the books, the non-English language comes first
- the writing in the illustrations is in both languages
- the names of the characters are appropriate to both languages
- the directionality of the book is appropriate to both languages, even if the other language goes from right to left
- one culture does not take precedence over the other, and the non-English language is not nested in the English-dominant culture.

RESOURCES

Publishing Houses for Languages Other than Spanish

Chinese:

- www.nihaobooks.com/?gclid=CKCTgKLqi6oCFQzHKgod7Xmlyw
- www.chinesebooksforchildren.com/
- www.asianparent.com/?gclid=CMjByOvqi6oCFQp75Qodd0Ga1w

Korean:

- www.hanbooks.com/
- www.littleseouls.com/category_28/Childrens-Bilingual-Books.htm

Portuguese:

- www.semfronteiraspress.com

Various Asian Languages:

- www.afk.com/

Book Companies for Books in a Variety of Languages:

- www.multilingualbooks.com
- www.mantralingua.com/usa/home.php
- <http://en.childrenslibrary.org/>
- www.internationalchildbook.com/languages/1120134
- www.mothertonguebooks.co.uk/shop/
- www.languagelizard.com