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Psychology in Education

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explains to her pupils that people outside the village will judge them by the way they talk and write. She goes on:

> *We have to feel sorry for them because they have only one way to talk. We're going to learn two ways to say things. One will be our Heritage way. The other will be Formal English. Then when we go to get jobs, we'll be able to talk like those people who only know and can only listen to one way. Maybe after we get the jobs we can help them to learn how it feels to have another language, like ours, that feels so good. We'll talk like them when we have to, but we'll always know our way is best.*
>
> (Delpit and Kohl, 2006: 41)

Learning the alternative versions of a language is relatively easy for most children, as long as they have good models, clear instruction and opportunities for authentic practice.

Bilingualism

What does bilingualism mean?

There are disagreements about the meaning of *bilingualism*. Some definitions focus exclusively on a language-based meaning: bilingual people, or bilinguals, speak two languages. But this limited definition minimises the significant problems that bilingual pupils face. There is more to being bilingual than just speaking two languages. You must also be able to move back and forth between two cultures while still maintaining a sense of your own identity (Blackledge, 2001b; Chawla, 2003). Being bilingual and bicultural means mastering the knowledge necessary to communicate in two cultures as well as dealing with potential discrimination and as a teacher, you will have to help your pupils to learn all these skills. There are a number of misconceptions about becoming bilingual and Table 5.3 summarises a few of these taken from Brice (2002).

Bilingualism is a topic that sparks heated debates and touches many emotions. One reason is the changing demographics discussed earlier in this chapter. There is no official source giving a detailed breakdown of how many people in the UK have English as a second language or the ranking of community languages spoken in the UK. However, at least 3 million people living in the UK were born in countries where English is not the national language (CILT, 2006) and more than 30 per cent of all London schoolchildren speak a language other than English at home (Baker and Eversley, 2000).

Three terms that you will see associated with bilingualism are **English language learners (ELL)**, describing pupils whose primary or heritage language is not English, **English as a second language** (ESL classrooms, for example) and more recently, **English as an additional language (EAL)**.

Bilingualism
Speaking two languages fluently.

English language learners (ELL)
Pupils whose primary or heritage language is not English.

English as a second language (ESL)
Designation for programmes and classes to teach English to pupils who are not native speakers of English.

English as an additional language (EAL)
Designation for programmes and classes to teach English to pupils who are not native speakers of English and may have other additional languages.

Becoming bilingual

Proficiency in a second language has two separate aspects: face-to-face communication (known as basic or contextualised language skills) and academic uses of language such as reading and doing grammar exercises (known as academic English) (Fillmore and Snow, 2000; Garcia, 2002). It takes pupils about two to three years in a good-quality teaching programme to be able to communicate face-to-face in a second language, but mastering academic language skills in the new language takes five to seven years (Collier, 1987). So pupils who seem in conversation to 'know' a second language may still have great difficulty with complex schoolwork in that language (Ovando, 1989; Sowdon, 2003).

CONNECT AND EXTEND

Read Hedgcock, J. (2001), *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 23*(1) (March), pp. 125–6.

Table 5.3 Myths about bilingual pupils

In the following table, L1 means the original language and L2 means the second language.

Myth	Truth
Learning a second language (L2) takes little time and effort.	Learning English as a second language takes 2–3 years for oral and 5–7 years for academic language use.
All language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) transfer from L1 to L2.	Reading is the skill that transfers most readily.
Code-switching is an indication of a language disorder.	Code-switching indicates high-level language skills in both L1 and L2.
All bilinguals easily maintain both languages.	It takes great effort and attention to maintain high-level skills in both languages.
Children do not lose their first language.	Loss of L1 and underdevelopment of L2 are problems for second language learners (semilingual in L1 and L2).
Exposure to English is sufficient for L2 learning.	To learn L2, pupils need to have a reason to communicate, access to English speakers, interaction, support, feedback and time.
To learn English, pupils' parents need to speak only English at home.	Children need to use both languages in many contexts.
Reading in L1 is detrimental to learning English.	Literacy-rich environments in either L1 or L2 support development of necessary prereading skills.
Language disorders must be identified by tests in English.	Children must be tested in both L1 and L2 to determine language disorders.

Here is how one international student, who went on to earn a doctoral degree and teach at a university, described her struggles with texts:

> *I could not understand why I was doing so poorly. After all, my grammar and spelling were excellent. It took me a long time to realise that the way text is organised in English is considerably different from the way text is organised in a romance language, Spanish. The process involved a different set of rhetorical rules which were grounded in cultural ways of being. I had never heard of the thesis statement, organisational rules, cohesion, coherence, or other features of discourse.*
>
> (Sotillo, 2002: 280)

Because they may be struggling with academic English, even though they are very knowledgeable, bilingual pupils may be overlooked for gifted and talented programmes. The next section tells you how to avoid this situation.

Reaching every pupil: recognising giftedness in bilingual pupils

To identify gifted bilingual pupils, you can use a case study or portfolio approach in order to collect a variety of evidence, including interviews with parents and peers. You could also make use of informal assessments, samples of pupils' work and

performances, pupil self-assessments and formal dynamic testing that takes account of cultural dissonance (Lidz and Macrine, 2001). This checklist from Castellano and Diaz (2002) is a useful guide and is not dissimilar to a number of other checklists for helping to identify gifted monolingual pupils. Watch for pupils who:

- learn English quickly;
- take risks in trying to communicate in English;
- practise English skills by themselves;
- initiate conversations with native English speakers;
- do not frustrate easily;
- are curious about new words or phrases and practise them;
- question word meanings. For example, 'How can a bat be an animal and also something you use to hit a ball?';
- look for similarities between words in their native language and English;
- are able to modify their language for less capable English speakers;
- use English to demonstrate leadership skills. For example, use English to resolve disagreements and to facilitate cooperative learning groups;
- prefer to work independently or with pupils whose level of English proficiency is higher than theirs;
- are able to express abstract verbal concepts with a limited English vocabulary;
- are able to use English in a creative way. For example, can make puns, poems, jokes or tell original stories in English;
- become easily bored with routine tasks or drill work;
- have a great deal of curiosity;
- are persistent; stick to a task;
- are independent and self-sufficient;
- have a long attention span;
- become absorbed with self-selected problems, topics and issues;
- retain, easily recall and use new information;
- demonstrate social maturity, especially in the home or community.

Bilingual education

Virtually everyone agrees that all citizens should learn the official language of their country but when and how should instruction in that language begin? Here, the debate is bitter at times, but it is clear we have not solved the problem. Is it better to teach English language learners (ELL) to read first in their native language or should they begin reading instruction in English? Do ELL need some oral lessons in English before reading instruction can be effective? Should other subjects, such as mathematics and social studies, be taught in the primary (home) language until the children are fluent in English? Around these questions there form two basic positions, which have given rise to two contrasting teaching approaches. The first focuses on making the *transition* to English as quickly as possible and the second attempts to *maintain* or improve the native language, and use the native language as the primary teaching language until English skills are more fully developed.

Proponents of the *transition* approach believe that English ought to be introduced as early as possible; they argue that valuable learning time is lost if pupils are taught in their native language. Most bilingual programmes today follow this line of thinking. Proponents of *native-language maintenance instruction*, however, raise four important issues (Armand *et al.*, 2004). First, children who are forced to try to learn maths or science in an unfamiliar language are bound to have trouble. What if you had been forced to learn

fractions or biology in a second language that you had studied for only a year or so? Some psychologists believe pupils taught by this approach may become **semilingual**; that is, they are not proficient in either language. Being semilingual may be one reason the dropout rate is so high for low-SES ethnic minority pupils (Dostert, 2004; Halmari, 2005).

Semilingual
Not proficient in any language; speaking one or more languages inadequately.

Second, pupils may get the message that their home languages (and therefore, their families and cultures) are second class (Blackledge, 2001b; Heller, 1992). Third, the academic content (maths, science, history, etc.) that pupils are taught in their native language is learned – they do not forget the knowledge and skills when they are able to speak English.

Lastly is what Kenji Hakuta (2008) sees as a paradox between the admiration for school attained bilingualism and scorn for home-acquired bilingualism. Ironically, by the time pupils have mastered academic English and let their home language deteriorate, they reach secondary school and are encouraged to learn a second language. A number of writers provide persuasive arguments that one goal of an educational system could be the development of *all pupils* as functional bilinguals (Errasti, 2003). In the UK, second language learning in schools is failing, with poor results at 16 and 18, and university language departments closing due to lack of student numbers. We suggest that many people in the developed English-speaking nation states are complacent about second language learning because English is commonly known to be the most widely spoken first or second global language. 'Surely somebody here must speak English!' is the mantra of mother tongue English speakers the world over. In this context, attempts to secure the 'development of all pupils as functional bilinguals' looks unlikely.

CONNECT AND EXTEND

Read Thomas, W. P. and Collier, V. P. (1998), 'Two languages are better than one', *Educational Leadership, 55*(4), pp. 23–7. This article makes the case that native and non-native speakers of English benefit greatly from learning together in two languages.

One approach to reaching this goal is to create classes that mix pupils who are learning a second language with pupils who are native speakers. The objective is for both groups to become fluent in both languages (Sheets, 2005). For truly effective bilingual education however, we will need many bilingual teachers. If you have any competence in another language, you might want to develop it fully for teaching.

Research on bilingual programmes

It is difficult to separate politics from practice in the debate about bilingual education. It is clear that high-quality bilingual education programmes can have positive results. Pupils improve in the subjects that were taught in their native language, in their mastery of English and in self-esteem as well (Hakuta, 2008; Wright and Taylor, 1995). English as a second language (ESL) programmes seem to have positive effects on reading comprehension (Koda, 1998). However, attention today is shifting from debate about general approaches to a focus on effective teaching strategies. As you will see many times in this book effective teaching strategies include:

- a combination of clarity of learning goals and direct instruction in needed skills – including learning strategies and tactics;
- teacher- or peer-guided practice leading to independent practice;
- authentic and engaging tasks (including ICT);
- opportunities for interaction and conversation that are story focused; and
- warm encouragement from the teacher.

Refer to Chisholm, 1998; Gersten, 1996; Ghosn, 2002; and Robinson, 2001 for more detail about these strategies. Table 5.4 provides a set of constructs for promoting learning and language acquisition that capture many of these methods for effective teaching.

We have dealt with a wide range of differences in this chapter. How can teachers provide an appropriate education for all their pupils? One answer is culturally responsive schools.

Table 5.4 Ideas for promoting learning and language acquisition

Effective teaching for pupils in bilingual and ESL classrooms combines many strategies – direct instruction, mediation, coaching, feedback, modelling, encouragement, challenge and authentic activities.

1 Structures, frameworks, scaffolds and strategies

- Provide support to pupils by 'thinking aloud', building on and clarifying input of pupils
- Use visual organisers, story maps or other aids to help pupils organise and relate information

2 Relevant background knowledge and key vocabulary concepts

- Provide adequate background knowledge to pupils and informally assess whether pupils have background knowledge
- Focus on key vocabulary words and use consistent language
- Incorporate pupils primary language meaningfully

3 Mediation/feedback

- Give feedback that focuses on meaning, not grammar, syntax or pronunciation
- Give frequent and comprehensible feedback
- Provide pupils with prompts or strategies
- Ask questions that press pupils to clarify or expand on initial statements
- Provide activities and tasks that pupils can complete
- Indicate to pupils when they are successful
- Assign activities that are reasonable, avoiding undue frustration
- Allow use of native language responses (when context is appropriate)
- Be sensitive to common problems in second language acquisition

4 Involvement

- Ensure active involvement of all pupils, including low-performing pupils
- Foster extended discourse

5 Challenge

- Implicit (cognitive challenge, use of higher-order questions)
- Explicit (high but reasonable expectations)

6 Respect for – and responsiveness to – cultural and personal diversity

- Show respect for pupils as individuals, respond to things pupils say, show respect for culture and family, and possess knowledge of cultural diversity
- Incorporate pupils' experiences into writing and language arts activities
- Link content to pupils' lives and experiences to enhance understanding
- View diversity as an asset, reject cultural deficit notions

Source: From 'Literacy instruction for language-minority students: the transition years' by R. Gersten, 1996, *Elementary School Journal, 96,* pp. 241–2. Copyright© 1996 by the University of Chicago Press. Adapted with permission.

Pause and Reflect

Identify the major issues relating to the debate over bilingual education. Explain the major approaches to bilingual education, and describe steps that a teacher can take to promote the learning and language acquisition of non-English-speaking pupils.

Creating Culturally Responsive Schools

Culturally responsive schools
Schools that provide culturally diverse pupils equitable access to the teaching–learning process.

Researcher Laurie Johnson (2003) uses the term 'culturally responsive' to describe schools that provide culturally diverse pupils with equitable access to the teaching–learning process. The goal of creating **culturally responsive schools** is to eliminate racism, sexism, classism and prejudice while adapting the content and methods of teaching to meet the needs of all pupils. In the past, discussions of teaching low-income pupils from racial, ethnic or language minority groups have focused on remedying problems or overcoming perceived deficits. However, thinking today emphasises teaching to the strengths and the 'resilience' of pupils. In the next section, we look at two approaches – culturally relevant pedagogy and fostering resilience.

CONNECT AND EXTEND

Read Allard, A. (2006),'A bit of a chameleon act': a case study of one teacher's understandings of diversity', *European Journal of Teacher Education, 29*(3) (August), pp. 319–40.

Culturally relevant pedagogy

Culturally relevant pedagogy
Excellent teaching for pupils from ethnic minorities that includes academic success, developing/maintaining cultural competence and developing a critical consciousness to challenge the status quo.

According to Professor of Education Geneva Gay, **culturally relevant pedagogy** is using 'the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of references and learning styles of ethnically diverse pupils to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them. It teaches to *and through* the strengths of these pupils. It is culturally *validating and affirming*' (2000: 29). Early Years scholar Smita Guha cautions us that 'Culturally responsive or culturally relevant teaching requires that teachers incorporate elements of students' culture in instruction, moving beyond cursory examples of food, festivals, and holidays' (2006: 16).

CONNECT AND EXTEND

Read Menkart, D. J. (1999). 'Deepening the meaning of heritage months', *Educational Leadership, 56*(7), pp. 19–21.

Several researchers have focused on teachers and teaching methods considered especially successful with pupils of colour and pupils in poverty (Cairney, 2000; Johnson, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Le Roux, 2001, 2002; Stuart and Volk, 2002). The work of Gloria Ladson-Billings (1990, 1992, 1995) is a good example. For three years, she studied excellent teachers in an African American community. In order to select the teachers, she asked parents and schools for nominations. Parents nominated teachers who respected them, created enthusiasm for learning in their children, and understood their children's need to operate successfully in two different worlds – the home community and the white world beyond. Schools nominated teachers who had few discipline problems, high attendance rates and high standardised test scores.

Based on her research, Ladson-Billings developed a conception of teaching excellence that encompasses, but also goes beyond, considerations of sociolinguistics or social organisations. She uses the term culturally relevant pedagogy to describe teaching that rests on three propositions. Pupils must:

1. **Experience academic success.** 'Despite the current social inequities and hostile classroom environments, pupils must develop their academic skills. The ways those skills are developed may vary, but all pupils need literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political skills in order to be active participants in a democracy' (Ladson-Billings, 1995: 160).
2. **Develop/maintain their cultural competence.** As they become more academically skilled, pupils still retain their cultural competence. 'Culturally relevant teachers utilise pupils' culture as a vehicle for learning' (Ladson-Billings, 1995: 161). For example,