Taking Advantage of the Bilingual Brain

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Seattle Public Library
English is not the only language that counts
Road Map

- Focus and hoped for outcomes
- Are you an emergent bilingual language learner?
- “We are sinking” video
- Shift in language attitudes – shift in pedagogy
- What we know about the bilingual brain
- Your brain in action: Mein Bruder Harald
- Translanguaging: All cylinders firing
- Multimedia to deepen learning
- Strategies to take advantage of the bilingual brain
Are You An Emergent Bilingual?

Depends on who is asking
How fluent are you?

I can fake it in a restaurant with a patient waiter.

I can hold my own in every day conversations.

If you hold a gun to my head and say “talk or I’ll shoot”, I can talk.

I’m pretty competent in most contexts.

I’m so good, I could get a job as a simultaneous translator at the U.N.
Shifts in Language Attitudes and Pedagogy
## Changing Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGLISH ONLY</th>
<th>TRANSLANGUAGING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. English right from the very start</td>
<td>1. Native languages are recognized and used in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No use of L1 in groups or pairs</td>
<td>2. Groups or pairs use L1 and then report out in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. L1 discouraged even during breaks</td>
<td>3. The need to speak L1 to reduce stress and make connections is recognized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Employers insist on 100% English at all times</td>
<td>4. Employers are flexible (English in front of customers, but not in other cases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Research on the Bilingual Brain

Different sections of the brain are associated with different language systems (L1; L2 etc).

Some areas of language processing overlap so they can have access to direct processing of information.

“Cognitive advantage” when it comes to processing certain complex tasks.
The bilingual brain always translates
Research on the Bilingual Brain

- Emotions are felt differently in L1 and L2
- Greater metacognitive awareness (analyzing how Language works)
- Effects greatest in migrant learners (not native bilinguals)
- Becoming bilingual is stressful
- Better able to switch between tasks
Has greater metalinguistic awareness

Greater cognitive aware
How do you say it: Contrastive Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>American Sign Language</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Amharic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A good life</td>
<td>boa vida</td>
<td></td>
<td>Una vida buena</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yesterday it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My name is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Which word says yellow?
What Are Implications for Our Work?
Brainbreaks
Watch your Brain at Work

What is happening in there?
Mein Bruder Harald

Metacognitive Awareness

What did you brain do?
How did you feel?
“Translanguaging”

Supporting the bilingual brain
Translanguaging Characteristics

Taking full advantage of all of the brain’s resources and using them to communicate

Connecting words and phrases and making decisions on what to use and how to use them with monolingual or bilingual audiences

Being aware of multilingual environments and resources and using them for learning (intentional and incidental)
Using Multimedia
To strengthen the bilingual brain
LOVE AND MONEY

The Storm
Welcome Parents
Stay in School
Love and Money
New Life Café
Asthma
No Smoking
The Wedding
Domestic Violence
The Hospital

Download the Important words
WE ARE NEW YORK

تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في التلفزيون مع قصصنا التي نحكيها

http://www.wny.gov/LearnEnglish
Teaching/Learning

In multi-lingual contexts
Honor your students’ cultures and languages.
Instructional Strategies

- Setting the tone
- Students teach and use “gambits” in their own language
- Contrastive analysis and language curiosity (cognate charts)
- Small group work in the dominant language
- Students bring in flyers and mail in L1 and explain to each other
Instructional Strategies (ctd)

- Watching the news in L1
- Bilingual picture dictionaries and sentence frames
- Group discussion of vocabulary
- Bilingual presentations (my home town)
- Bilingual word walls and personal dictionaries
- Review/Preview in L1
Teacher and students share the same language
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGg7i9gH4zs
How Can you Support Translanguaging?
A Word of Caution

Constant translation is not the answer
Multimedia Resources

With Native Language Support
Children’s Stories in L1

Multimedia Resources

- **ESL Video Series**
  - [https://wespeaknyc.cityofnewyork.us/](https://wespeaknyc.cityofnewyork.us/)
- Bilingual picture dictionaries:
- Google Translate and other online dictionaries [https://translate.google.com/](https://translate.google.com/)
- **Duolingo**: [www.duolingo.com](http://www.duolingo.com)
  
  (does not include Amharic and other lesser known languages)
- **Cell-ED** – mobile learning [https://www.cell-ed.com/](https://www.cell-ed.com/)
- Bilingual Fairy Tales
  - [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiqZlGpZl2Oc2kKd0EnK-vA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiqZlGpZl2Oc2kKd0EnK-vA)

Also: News and YouTube in L1

- **Amharic News**: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueOvt-Z_TXk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueOvt-Z_TXk)
- **ESL for Arabic speakers**: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iG7NczhhK0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iG7NczhhK0)
What are your take-aways for the day?
Want to Learn More?

The Bilingual Brain
And What It Tells Us About the Science
References

• “Judicious use of the native language in the ESL classroom” – discussed in an interview with Focus on Basics
  • [http://www.ncsall.net/index.html@id=189.html](http://www.ncsall.net/index.html@id=189.html)


• The Bilingual Brain: And What It Tells Us about the Science of Language
  by [Albert Costa](http://www.ncsall.net/index.html@id=189.html) (Author), [John W. Schwieter](http://www.ncsall.net/index.html@id=189.html) (Translator)