

Second Language Articles

For Further Reading

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Foreign Language Instruction in the Elementary Schools

On April 26, Senator Paul Simon (D-IL) held a hearing on foreign language instruction in the elementary schools. Senator Simon, a member of the Senate Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities of the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, called upon business leaders, educators and elementary students to demonstrate the need for and importance of early language learning.

Senator Simon noted that the consideration of elementary foreign language programs is particularly important because Congress is addressing the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) this year. In his opening remarks, Senator Simon recalled a recent trip to southern Africa, where he observed that, "The elementary school children I met in Botswana had more foreign language training than most American college graduates."

The first witness called to testify was Jeffrey Munks, Director of Marketing and Sales at AT&T Language Line Services and Visiting Fellow at the National Foreign Language Center in Washington, D.C. The Language Line provides telephone-based interpretation in more than 140 languages. Mr. Munks noted that only 30% of the AT&T interpreter workforce is American-born. In fact, the demand for competent interpreters is "being met primarily by people from other countries who have come to America with skills in English that far exceed their American counterparts' skills with the target language." He believes it is possible for Americans to develop commensurate language skills if they begin foreign language learning in the elementary schools.

Dr. Rahid Khalidi, a specialist of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Chicago, echoed Mr. Munk's concerns, advocating the study of languages other than English beginning in kindergarten. Dr. Khalidi noted that his students who reach the university-level with no prior knowledge of a Middle Eastern language have little hope of developing the fluency required for doctoral research in area studies.

Once the need for early language learning was addressed, innovative approaches to elementary language acquisition were demonstrated by two

student presentations. The first group of students were part of a two-way immersion program at the Key School in Arlington, VA, and were escorted by their principal, Kathy Panfil. The students discussed in both Spanish and English the prevention and control of environmental contamination. The second group of students, participants in the Japanese immersion program in the Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia, were accompanied by the Foreign Language Coordinator, Martha Abbott. The third-graders wowed the Senator with the pledge of allegiance in Japanese, followed by an oral and written exercise on fractions in Japanese, and a Japanese rendition of, "It's A Small World."

These impressive demonstrations were reinforced by the testimony of Dr. Donna Christian, from the National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning, by Christine Brown, the Chair of the National Foreign Language Standards Project K-12 Task Force, and by Myriam Met, Advisory Council Member of the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. All three experts agreed that students who have the opportunity to learn a second language early will have significant cognitive, linguistic and cultural advantages compared to those children not exposed to foreign language curricula. They also urged the Senator to continue his support in Congress for initiatives and funding which support both elementary and secondary language programs.

After thanking the witnesses for their superb testimony, Senator Simon noted that, "We are the only nation on the face of the earth in which an individual will study French for two years in high school and claim that they are fluent in French. No where else does this happen." Senator Simon is widely regarded as a Congressional leader on international education issues. He served in 1979 as a task force member on the President's Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies, wrote *The Tongue Tied American: Confronting the Foreign Language Crisis*, and presently serves on the Executive Committee of the House-Senate International Education Study Group.

Contact: Julie E. Inman

Languages and International Education in Educational Reform

On April 29, 1994, Governor Madeline Kunin, the Deputy Secretary of Education, in a luncheon speech at the Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies, addressed the role of languages and international education in the current education reform effort. The JNCL-NCLIS Delegate Assembly was attended by approximately 65 representatives of its 52 member organizations. These representatives include executive directors, presidents and delegates of scholarly and professional organizations who convene annually to discuss national language policy.

Governor Kunin emphasized our responsibility to provide quality education to all students regardless of race, class or financial status. She mentioned several programs that focus on making challenging classes, such as Advanced Placement, available to minority students. Stressing the need for programs that encourage equity while promoting excellence, Kunin underscored that current reform is committed to exposing all students to challenging programs.

Deputy Secretary Kunin specifically addressed the issue of increased and improved foreign language education. She commented that she can directly relate to this issue since she immigrated to the United States from Switzerland at an early age and speaks three languages. She stated that foreign language education should begin at an early age when children are the most open to language development. Kunin referred to several successful language programs that already exist in the United States. She described one such bilingual program already in place in Washington, D.C. at the Oyster school. This school teaches elementary age children in English and Spanish and has been very successful.

Finally, Governor Kunin was optimistic for the future of education programs in the United States. She is confident that foreign language programs will have their "Day in the Sun" with the combined efforts of educators and legislators. She felt that the Clinton Administration and Goals 2000 in particular have been and will continue to be a major catalyst toward improving education in the United States.

Contact: Beth Franz

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Foreign Language: On Starting Early

MYRIAM MET

The most significant trend in elementary school foreign language instruction is the exponential increase in opportunities for children to begin foreign language study while in the elementary grades. Nine states require instruction to begin in elementary school; most other states likely will require it soon or provide substantial incentives to schools which do. These states, along with a rapidly growing number of schools and school systems, are recognizing that early foreign language instruction benefits students cognitively and academically, contributes to the achievement of schools' multicultural goals, and can help to meet the needs of the nation.¹

A number of recent studies have confirmed and expanded upon earlier research which showed that students who begin to learn another language in childhood score better on measures of cognitive functioning than do their monolingual peers. And students in elementary foreign language programs have equalled or outperformed those in control groups on standardized achievement tests, even when these subjects were taught in another language or when time has been "taken out" of the school day to make time for foreign language instruction. Other research indicates that pre-adolescents are more receptive to learning about people of other cultures and may be more likely than older learners to develop positive cross-cultural attitudes. In addition, students who begin foreign language instruction when they are young will have time to develop the levels of proficiency Americans will

need to participate effectively in the global economic and political arenas in the 21st century.

Elementary program models may be placed on a continuum reflecting time devoted to language study and program goals and objectives. In *immersion* programs, the most ambitious model in terms of goals and the most time intensive, the regular curriculum is taught through the medium of another language. In partial immersion, at least half the school day is taught in the foreign language; in total immersion, all instruction is in the language. In the United States, immersion programs begin in kindergarten or 1st grade. Language teaching per se is not the focus of instruction but, rather, language is acquired through instruction in other subjects. Immersion produces extremely high levels of foreign language proficiency. In addition, immersion students consistently perform as well as or better than controls on measures of achievement in reading language arts, mathematics, and science, even though immersion students generally learn these subjects in a foreign language. Since in immersion the "language" teacher is the classroom teacher, no extra staff is needed, making it the least expensive program model. But immersion requires one teacher per class, seven for a K-6 program of one class per grade level, who must be highly skilled and certified elementary school teachers with native-like oral and written proficiency in the foreign language. First pioneered and now widespread in Canada, immersion accounts for only 3 percent of U.S. programs.

Approximately 45 percent of programs are FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary School), a sequential program beginning at any grade K-6 and continuing through the elementary grades. FLES classes may meet between 2 and 5 times per week in sessions ranging from 20 to 70 minutes, with a minimum of 90 minutes per week being scheduled in many programs. When FLES is part of a well-articulated, long sequence of study, it can result in useable levels of language proficiency and can significantly contribute to improving students' knowledge of and atti-

tudes toward people of other cultures. A relatively new trend is content-based FLES, which integrates foreign language with other subjects of the elementary curriculum. For example, 3rd grade students who were recently studying Ghana in social studies were also learning vocabulary for animals in their Chinese FLES class. They used a Venn diagram to classify animals according to whether they may be found in Ghana, China, or both.

Since one FLES teacher may work with as many as 200-250 students per week, these programs allow for wide participation within a given school. This is an important advantage at a time when there is a critical shortage of trained teachers for all elementary foreign language programs. One disadvantage of FLES is that schools usually need an additional teacher—over and above the regular staff—for program delivery.

FLEX (Foreign Language Experience or Exploratory) is a short-term program lasting from several weeks to one year which focuses primarily on cultural objectives. FLEX can provide strong motivation for students to continue their language study later and a sound orientation to learning about people of other cultures. However, since FLEX results in minimal development of language skills, this model cannot achieve many of the goals which motivate the initiation of elementary foreign language programs in the first place. Also, it should be noted that research related to the academic and cognitive benefits of early language learning has not included FLEX students. About 41 percent of all U.S. elementary school foreign language programs are FLEX.

All of the models described here require curriculums and materials that are developmentally appropriate and firmly rooted in sound foreign language pedagogy. Often these are developed at the local school or district level, frequently by the teachers themselves. These teachers must be qualified to teach languages and to work with young learners. The most effective programs provide for careful articulation from level to level, no matter which model is used.

A number of organizations and net-

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Foreign Language: On Starting Early

MYRIAM MET

works provide support and information for program planners, teachers, and parents.² It's never been easier, and perhaps never more important, to begin sound programs of foreign language instruction in the elementary school than it is today. □

¹For a summary of the literature on early foreign language instruction, see M. Met and V. Galloway, (in press), "Research in Foreign Language Curriculum," in *Handbook of Research on Curriculum*, edited by P. Jackson, (New York: Macmillan).

²For a resource packet with more in-depth background information, a list of organizations to contact, and print materials to assist in program planning, readers may write to the author at the address that follows or to Nancy Rhodes, National Network for Early Language Learning, 1118 22nd St., NW, Washington, DC 20037.

Myriam Met is Foreign Language Coordinator, Montgomery County Public Schools, 850 Hungerford Dr., Rockville, MD 20850.

If You Speak Two Languages, You Are Bilingual.

If You Speak One Language, You Are American.

by *Alexandra Allred*
and *Karen Powe*

In the highly competitive arena of the international economy, the United States continues to fare well. Despite the naysayers, the U.S. worker still outperforms all the competition, including the highly regarded Germans and Japanese. Let's face it: American products can be marketed anywhere in the world.

It is important that we not lose sight of this fact and of our many other strengths, which include the ability to acknowledge and overcome deficiencies. In that regard, we suggest that a deficiency in America's competitive status is our long-time reluctance to actively address our linguistic limitations.

While English remains the primary international language for conducting business and even diplomacy, ability to use other languages is important for Americans. It is, therefore, unfortunate that we continue to neglect our phenomenal natural resources in languages. The remarkable multicultural nature of modern American society affords an opportunity to reach across borders that is unequalled by any other nation.

Alexandra Allred is a free-lance writer and author of children's books with international themes. Karen Powe is the editor of Updating School Board Policies.

Our marvelous meld of languages and cultures provides us with the means for educating our future leaders (who are, potentially, future leaders of the world) to achieve even greater heights in influencing world events and international prosperity. We have but to take advantage of our multilingual and multicultural skills. Conversely, if we do not harness those skills, they can be a divisive and/or debilitating element in our society.

Frankly, you — the school board members — are facing yet another critical set of value judgements. The truth is that in the 1990s, bilingual and multicultural education continue to evoke deeply held feelings. Some opponents say they threaten to divide the United States into many, small, internal "nations" that are defined by language. Others say they are expensive, inefficient and un-American.

Supporters maintain that it is both the obligation and the opportunity of a multicultural society with a strong immigrant heritage to provide a bilingual education. Indeed, we have been arguing the merits and the limitations of bilingual education since the colonial period, but rarely has the discussion been so important to our future national well-being as it is today.

Continuing changes in the make-up of the U.S. population illustrates the

significance of this issue. A recent article in *Report on Education Research* states:

"The number of U.S. residents speaking a language other than English at home reached an all-time high in 1989. According to the new Education Department trend data — the first to document recent changes in U.S. language characteristics — about 12 percent of the population speak a foreign language at home, up from nine percent in 1979. But 'contrary to popular belief, almost half of all non-English-language speakers in the population were born in the United States.' Commissioner Emerson Elliott of ED's National Center for

Education Statistics said when releasing the report." ("LEP Population Changing Dramatically, NCES Says," *Report on Education Research*, Vol.26, No.2, January 19, 1994)

In the not-so-long run, these non- and limited-English-speaking students in our public schools will make up a growing segment of the U.S. labor force. In the short-run, they represent an increasing proportion of public school students. We cannot afford to do less than our best in providing both English-speaking and limited-English-proficient (LEP) students with the language skills they need to succeed.

As school boards make the decisions that will affect bilingual education programs and the growing numbers of LEP students, it might be helpful to take a brief look at the history of bilingual education in the U.S.

A Look Back

As early as the 17th century, there were over 18 different "foreign" languages spoken in America, in addition to the hundreds of languages spoken by native Indian tribes throughout the country. English was the most prevalent language with French, German, Dutch, Swedish and Polish also widely spoken.

Indeed, no uniform national language was chosen in the U.S. until the 19th century when a nationalistic feeling swept across the country. As Italian and Jewish immigrants began to outnumber earlier immigrants from Germany, Ireland and Scandinavia, a concern for cultural and linguistic ho-

mogeneity developed and English became the "first" language.

The multicultural nature of early American society continued to be reflected in the nation's schools throughout the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. For example, in Ohio, in the early 1900s, schools were required to educate students in English, German or both. Similarly, Louisiana required that either French or English be taught in its schools.

Two years after the annexation of the territory of New Mexico in 1912, Spanish and English were the authorized languages. In the same period, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska and Oregon all directed that a language other than English be taught in the public schools. In fact, whenever an immigrant group gained political power or attention, that foreign language was incorporated into the education system.

During World War I, anti-German sentiment resulted in the actual banning of teaching or even speaking German. An anti-foreign language, anti-immigrant fervor grew and the study of foreign languages, save Latin or ancient Greek, disappeared from U.S. public school classrooms.

The impact of the anti-foreign movement was felt for many years. As an illustration of this phenomenon, in some school districts in Texas with a student body that was 70 percent or more Mexican-American, it remained illegal to conduct a class in Spanish until 1973.

In the 1950s and 1960s, a teaching method called English as a Second

Language (ESL) was introduced into public schools for language minority students. Originally developed in the 1930s, ESL was meant to instruct foreign diplomats and college students. Because it was designed to teach highly motivated adults, ESL was not originally successful when used with children.

Most language minority students remained in a "sink or swim" learning environment where many were simply unable to keep up with English-speaking classmates. Drop-out rates soared. (Data on drop-out rates by racial/ethnic/language groups were not systematically tracked until the 1970s. However, qualitative data from educators supported the belief that we were losing many of our non- and limited-English-speaking students.) The children who remained in school were more often than not placed (or rather, misplaced) in classes for learning disabled students.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 barred national origin discrimination, granting all citizens equal opportunity. By 1968, Title VII was added to the Elementary and Secondary School Education Act, providing for a federal role and federal dollars for bilingual education. In May 1970, the Office of Civil Rights issued a memorandum stating that affirmative steps must be taken to "correct the English language deficiency of many minority children in order to provide them with equal educational opportunities."

However, it was not until the Supreme Court decision in *Lau vs. Nichols* (1974) that the "sink or swim" method was discredited. In *Lau*, Chinese students contended that the failure of their San Francisco school district to provide supplemental courses in English was a direct violation of the Equal Protection Clause and the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Although the Supreme Court found in favor of the students, it declined to remedy the problem. As a result, the courts were suddenly flooded with similar cases in which claimants maintained that school districts were dis-

criminating against non-English-speaking minorities. Thus, the Lau decision certainly influenced the opinions of lower courts on the issue of bilingual education, but the lack of guidelines left the education of LEP students to the individual interpretations of lower court judges.

As educators and legislators sought a solution, they found a program — the Coral Way Experiment (Dade County, Florida) — that provided a bilingual education method that, for the first time, could be evaluated by educators and non-educators alike and that was amenable to replication. The program's goal was to achieve fluent bilingualism for both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking children. By 1966, the district was reporting that the children in the bilingual program were "radically becoming culturally advantaged." In English, both groups of students did as well as, or better than, their counterparts in monolingual schools, and the Spanish-speaking children achieved equivalent levels in Spanish.

As the numbers of language minority children increased in school districts across the country, more bilingual education programs were established and new teaching methods were tried. The success of the Coral Way program was experienced by many other school districts in succeeding years, but there were also less successful bilingual education programs.

Educators and parents began to question the effectiveness of bilingual programs as the best way to educate LEP students. Thus, during the third century of our country's history, we ran the full cycle: rejection of second languages, adaptation to the need to teach them, then once again questioning the place of second languages in the education process.

Taking Stock

While it is pertinent to consider what has gone before, what has worked/not worked in addressing issues confronting the public schools, it is equally important to see those issues in the context of their time. A lot has changed since the 1960s, particularly in regard

to non- and limited-English-speaking children in the U.S.

According to a 1994 report from the National Center for Education Statistics, the numbers of persons in the U.S. who speak languages other than English at home is at an all time high and increasing rapidly. Between 1979 and 1989, the number of persons five years of age and older who were reported to speak a language other than English at home increased by about 40 percent. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that one in seven Americans speaks a language other than English at home; that is an astonishing 31.8 million American. Two of every 10 Americans who speak a language other than English at home have limited or no English, i.e., about 6.4 million people.

As America struggles to adjust to this new reality, an understanding of how this change in language use affects education becomes particularly important. The U.S. Department of Education publication, *Language Characteristics and Schooling in the United States, A Changing Picture: 1979 and 1989*, takes a close look at the impact of language usage and includes some major findings:

- There was an increase of 65 percent in the number of Spanish speakers and of 98 percent in speakers of Asian languages. The numbers of speakers of other European languages, while still large, declined 18 percent overall. Major languages spoken in the U.S. in 1989 were Spanish, French, Italian, German, Chinese dialects, Philippine dialects and Korean.
- Contrary to popular belief, almost half of all non-English speakers were born in the United States.
- Nearly half of the non-English speaking population has difficulty speaking English. One quarter of those with difficulty were born in the U.S.
- In 1979, among children who were reported to have difficulty speaking English, 53 percent

were enrolled below the modal grade for their age, a much higher rate than that of children who speak English only (24 percent). In 1989, this proportion had dropped 15 percentage points to 38 percent, and was about the same as for English-only speakers (34 percent) who are overage for their grade.

Obviously, the LEP student population is not a homogeneous group. There are, in fact, six distinctive group of students who may require some level of instruction in ESL or who are in need of assistance in improving their English-speaking skills:

- immigrants with no English skills at all
- non-English speaking, native born citizens
- those who are literate in English, but who have parents or grandparents at home who only speak their native language (These students frequently speak both English and their native language with fluency.)
- American monolingual children who have very poor language skills
- American monolingual children who speak English fluently but have no knowledge of another language

Advocates of bilingual education express concern for the last group, citing that in our pluralistic society people who speak only one language may be at a disadvantage, depending upon their locale or future education/careers.

Given the variety of English-speaking skill levels and needs represented within these disparate groups, it is little wonder that a variety of curricula and instructional techniques have been developed and that a variety of success rates are reported.

Into the 21st Century

Do not despair, dear reader. It is not the purpose of this article to provide a menu of programs or to assess their relative merits/disadvantages. Rather,

it is our intent to present the background information that will enable school boards to review current policies on bilingual instruction in the light of a reality in contemporary America: the continuing need to educate non-English-speaking and limited-English-proficient children in our public schools.

The numbers of non-English-speaking people coming to the U.S. show no signs of decreasing. The children, of course, enter our local school systems and are likely to remain in their new country as adults. These children are, therefore, as important to our future as are those students who come from English-as-a-first-language backgrounds. How well we prepare all our children to be productive citizens will determine how vital the country will be in the 21st century.

Few would disagree that we must provide the best education possible for all our students. We do, however, continue to debate about *how* to do it and, the debate is particularly heated. The most frequently heard criticisms of bilingual programs is that by teaching students in their own languages we delay their learning English and we send a message that English is not all that important.

Supporters of bilingual teaching methods say that every child should have the opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills s/he needs to advance in school and succeed in society, and no one should have to put off getting those basic skills in order to first acquire English proficiency.

We are often confused by the arguments. And to confound the issue further, many of us hold contradictory opinions about bilingual education. According to editors M. Beatriz Arias and Ursula Casanova in *Bilingual Education: Politics, Practice, Research*, many political leaders and citizens, at one and the same time, hold opposing beliefs about bilingual competence. They tend to affirm the need to promote second-language instruction for English-speaking students, acknowledging the personal, academic, social and economic advantages in that accomplishment

However, they frown on the use of ethnic languages for the instruction of language minority students in the schools, either on a part-time or an equal-time-with-English basis. The authors question "why we attempt to promote bilingualism where it is more artificial and least likely to succeed, and yet discourage it where it is more natural and likely to be reinforced through daily use."

Carl Petersen, President of the Mass. Assn. of School Committees, suggests another, clearer perspective that school board members might consider. Dr. Petersen, also an associate professor of social science at Wentworth Institute of Technology says, "It seems to me...that by narrowing the debate [about bilingual education] to whether or not children will be taught from the beginning in English or their native language, we are overlooking the larger, more important issue at stake: namely, what we should be doing to ensure that these children can achieve their potential to be educated, productive members of our society."

Dr. Petersen continues, "The issue... is a difficult one for those of us who guide educational policy. It tests our commitment to children — all children — that our concern must always be how best to educate all students. However, we will not be successful in this endeavor if we set educational policy that does not serve all students well, or if we deceive ourselves into believing that we need not provide educational alternatives to meet individual students' needs.

"In a very real sense we must come to recognize that by accommodating the needs of bilingual students we are putting ourselves one step closer to reaching our own long-term goals. For this reason, we cannot allow ourselves to abandon the attempt to effectively educate these children in our schools. Ultimately, bilingual education is in everyone's interest as we prepare our students for the challenges of the 21st century. It is the ultimate challenge for us in the 20th." (A Case for Bilingual Education, MASC Journal, Spring 1993)

Conclusion

It is within the perspective of an excellent and equitable education for all of America's public school students that school boards must decide what kind of education they will offer to their non- and limited-English-speaking students.

Even school districts that may not have a significant concern about bilingual education programs (as determined by the number of language minority students in the district), are faced with deciding the importance of such programs for two practical reasons:

- 1) As we have mentioned, the multicultural nature of American society shows no indication of decreasing in coming years and, as effective school leaders know, visionary planning is the key to successful education now and in the future. Just as you conduct research and adopt policies for issues such as future facilities, you need to provide the structure, through policy development, for changing demographics in your school district.
- 2) The cost to the U.S. economy, in terms of lost opportunities to provide education and training for specific populations, is not restricted to those areas where language minority populations are located. When a child in an inner city or a rural area fails to succeed in school, we all pay the price — in lost wages and taxes, in reduced productivity, in increased support services required.

As the guardians of excellent and equitable education for *all* American public school students, you — the local school board member — are responsible for the education of our children. We are reminded almost *ad nauseam* of the African proverb that says, "It takes an entire village to raise a child." However tired we may be of hearing it, it is true that every decision you make in your local district impacts on the education of all of America's children. If some of those children have limited English skills, your challenge is that much greater. ■

Language Learning: The Key to Understanding and Harmony

Anthony Mollica

Teachers, parents and researchers can give a long list of advantages to be derived from studying a second language.

The incorrect translation of a word may have very well been responsible for the death of over 200,000 people. Towards the end of the Second World War, the United States had offered Japan an opportunity to surrender. The Japanese reply contained the word *mokusatsu* which means "withholding comment pending decision." Through mistranslation, the verb *mokusatsu* was rendered as "ignore." As a result, the allies believed that the ultimatum had been flatly rejected and President Truman ordered the use of the atomic bomb.

Gaffes

Less tragic examples abound: *The Wall Street Journal* reported that General Motors was puzzled by the lack of enthusiasm the introduction of its Chevrolet Nova automobile aroused among Puerto Ricans. The reason was very simple. *Nova* means *star* in Spanish, but when spoken it sounds like *no va* which means "it doesn't go." GM quickly changed the name to *Caribe* and the car sold nicely.

Linguistic and cultural gaffes made by translators or by non-native speakers have often been a source of chagrin. One recalls the embarrassment President Carter faced when the interpreter stated that the President "lusted" for Polish women. A more recent situation reported by the Canadian Press, involved Montreal's former mayor

Jean Drapeau. At the end of a speech during a tour of China, the Mayor urged his audience "to beat up your brother when he is drunk." A glance at M. Drapeau's text, however, showed that he never advocated such violence! What he had said in French was "Il faut battre le fer pendant qu'il est chaud."

During a keynote address at the annual conference of the Ontario Modern Language Teachers' Association in March 1993, Veronica Lacey, Director of Education for the City of North York, Ontario, shared some humorous incorrect translations made by non-native speakers:

- a Hong Kong dentist advertised, "Teeth will be extracted by the latest Methodists";
- a restaurant sign in Acapulco assured the would-be customers that "The manager has personally passed all the water served here";
- and a laundry in Rome invited potential customers to "leave your clothes here and spend the afternoon having a good time!"

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Second Language Study and Basic Skills in Louisiana

Abstract

Third, fourth and fifth graders who participated in second language study in Louisiana's public schools showed significantly higher scores on the 1985 Basic Skills Language Arts Test than did a similar group of non-participants. Additionally, by fifth grade the math scores of participants were also higher than those of non participants. Second language and no second language students were matched for race, sex, and grade level. The academic level of students in both groups was estimated by their previous Basic Skills Tests results and statistically equated.

The 13,200 students in this analysis were randomly chosen from among those who had not been exposed to a foreign language in the home, had not repeated a grade in 1985, and whose 1984 and 1985 test results were available.

Bureau of Accountability

Louisiana Department of Education

FLESNEWS

NATIONAL NETWORK FOR EARLY LANGUAGE LEARNING

Volume 1 Number 2

Winter 1987-88

The Louisiana Report: Second Language Study Improves Basic Skills

One result of the current national outcry for excellence in education has been renewed public interest in foreign language instruction at the elementary level. Although most curricular specialists endorse foreign language instruction, some controversy exists as to when it should start, which children would benefit most, and whether the always limited resources of time and money would not be better allocated to instruction in basic skills.

Proponents of early instruction argue that the cognitive consequence of foreign language study may have a positive impact on basic skills acquisition. In theory, exposure to a second language at the elementary level increases a student's general cognitive level insofar as the student becomes aware that a word and the thing it represents are independent entities. This is thought to enable a student to reach a level of abstraction not otherwise so readily available (Lambert, 1981). General cognitive functioning, as well as exposure to parallel language systems, is often linked to increases in native language skills (Lambert, 1978).

The Louisiana study was designed to determine the impact of elementary foreign language programs on basic skills acquisition. Only school systems and grades that provided second language instruction for a total of 150 minutes/week (typically 30 minutes/day) were included. Subjects were 13,200 students in third, fourth, and fifth grades who had not been exposed to a foreign language in the home, had not repeated a grade in 1985, and whose 1984 and 1985 Louisiana Basic Skills Tests results (used to estimate academic talent) were available. In order to determine whether foreign language instruction had different effects on different subgroups of students, both foreign language (FL) and non-foreign language (NFL) groups were matched for race, sex, and grade level.

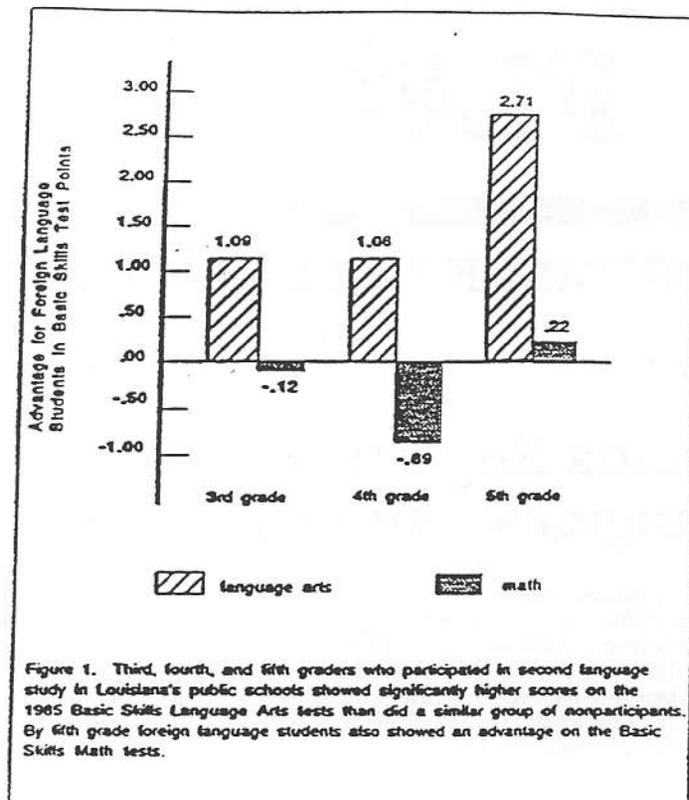
Results of this study indicate that regardless of their race, sex, or academic level, students in foreign language classes outperformed those who were not taking foreign language on the third, fourth, and fifth grade language arts sections of Louisiana's Basic Skills Tests (see Figure 1). Foreign language study appears to increase the scores of boys as much as girls, and blacks as much as other races. This finding supports the notion that, beginning as early as the third grade, second language study facilitates the acquisition of English language skills.

Although FL students at all the grade levels in the analysis showed higher scores than NFL students on language arts, the

advantage was more than doubled for FL students in the fifth grade. Third and fourth grade FL students, however, also showed a significant overall advantage over NFL students. The results of this study suggest that foreign language study aids, not hinders, the acquisition of English language arts skills. Students who are performing poorly in reading and language arts should be encouraged, not discouraged, from participating in foreign language study.

Acquisition of basic math skills is more difficult to interpret. Overall, there was neither a significant advantage nor disadvantage for FL students on the Basic Skills math sections. Once again, the results show that students of different races and sexes responded in much the same way as far as foreign language study was concerned. There was, however, a significant difference in FL and NFL students with respect to grade level. That is, FL and NFL students performed differently depending on which grade was tested. Fourth grade FL students showed some disadvantage compared with NFL students, but by fifth grade FL students were performing better than NFL students.

The most significant predictor of success on the 1985 Basic Skills mathematics sections was the previous year's (1984) Basic Skills language scores. Insofar as FL study is related to increases in language scores, and the language scores predict math scores, one would expect that FL study would eventually help raise math scores. Some explanation on this order may



account for the turnaround for FL students in math at the fifth grade.

Results of this study confirm what educators have been speculating about for years—foreign language study at the elementary school level improves students' abilities in English language arts. Although results are not conclusive for the influence of foreign language on math skills, by the end of fifth grade foreign language students were outperforming their non-foreign-language peers in math skills as well as in English skills.

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This article is based on a 1986 report prepared by Eileen A. Rafferty, Bureau of Accountability, Office of Research and Development, Louisiana Department of Education. Copies of the complete report can be obtained by writing to: Perry M. Waguespack, Acting Director, Foreign Languages, Louisiana Department of Education, Post Office Box 94064, Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9064.

Research Editor: E. Statzner

FLES* NEWS

Georgia PTA Passes FLES* Resolution (for Sequential FLES, FLEX and Immersion)

One of the goals of the National FLES* Commission of AATF and the National FLES* Committee of AATSP is to develop a closer working relationship with PTA's on the local, state and national levels. Through the efforts of members of the AATF and AATSP FLES* Groups, and through the Georgia leadership of Lynne Bryan, Gisela Griffin, Marcia Spielberger and many other Georgia foreign language professionals and interested parents, the Georgia state PTA passed the following resolution:

Resolution Passed by the Georgia State PTA Foreign Language Programs in Elementary School

Whereas: 1. Children have the ability to learn and excel in the pronunciation and comprehension of a foreign language.

Whereas: 2. Children who have studied a foreign language in elementary school achieve expected gains and even have higher scores on standardized tests in reading, language arts and mathematics than those who have not.

Whereas: 3. Children who have studied a foreign language show greater flexibility, creativity, divergent thinking and higher order thinking skills.

Whereas: 4. Children who have studied a foreign language develop a sense of cultural pluralism (openness to and appreciation of other cultures).

Whereas: 5. Children studying a foreign language have an improved self-concept and sense of achievement in school.

Whereas: 6. Elementary foreign language study has a favorable effect on foreign language study later on in high school and college.

Whereas: 7. The possession of foreign language skills and the ability to communicate across cultures, both within the U.S. and abroad, enhance the employability of our citizens and their career success, and

Whereas: 8. The possession of foreign language skills enhances the ability of U.S. citizens in our state and in the nation to do business in a global economy, and

Whereas: 9. The ability to use foreign languages in the socio-political arena is critical in promoting a democratic way of life.

Now, therefore, be it:

Resolved, That the inclusion of Foreign Language programs in our elementary

(K-5) and middle schools be endorsed and encouraged, and be it further

Resolved, That these Foreign Language Programs begin as early as possible, and provide the longest possible sequence of instruction, and be it further

Resolved, That articulated foreign language study from early childhood through high school, college and university levels be promoted.

Principle 1: As much as possible, language learning should emulate authentic language use. (Heidi Bymes)

Discussion: Second language learning is no longer limited to an academic elite. Instead, it is intended to reach all learners. Therefore, in the age of communication, second language instruction seeks to enable learners to use the language in the ways all of us use our first languages, to communicate with others.

This use orientation, the ability to perform communicative tasks in and with the language rather than merely to be informed about it, means that students should encounter authentic models throughout their instruction, in listening and in reading. In turn, they should engage in real-life tasks through speaking and writing.

An emphasis on authentic language use has two aspects:

- the non-linguistic aspect, through which learners engage in tasks that could well take place in real life. For example, telling another person what she is currently wearing is hardly ever an authentic task; but planning what one might wear to a certain event and talking about it is.
- the linguistic aspect, through which classroom language is not overly simplified and thereby impoverished. While teachers would tailor their language to respect the learners' abilities, much like a caretaker considers a child's native language abilities, they would not artificially avoid the use of past tense forms in telling a story just because those forms "had not yet been covered." Instead, the communicative situation "story-telling" itself becomes the reason for using past tense, thereby allowing learners to make the connection between a communicative function and the language forms that are used to express that function.

Summary: Only through continuous authentic use, from the beginning of instruction, can the multiple and complex connections between communicative function and formal manifestation gradually be internalized by learners. Instead of supporting language learning by supposedly making things simpler, a reduction of language might actually end up restricting the data from which the learners can create their hypotheses about how the language really works. By making authentic use central to the instructional process, one can reasonably expect that learners will, ultimately, be able to handle authentic second language communicative situations.

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Teaching and Learning K-12 Authentic Instruction Communication

Principle 2. The goal of language learning is performance with language rather than knowledge about language. (Myriam Met)

Teaching and Learning K-12 Meaning

Discussion: The purpose of language is to communicate meaning. Because in real life language is used to accomplish real-life purposes, the ability to use language for these purposes (requesting, explaining, persuading, describing) is the goal of language instruction. To accomplish these purposes, students need to acquire knowledge of the language: its lexicon, its syntax, and the relationships between meaning and language. But knowledge of the elements of language and how they are put together is insufficient. Learners must be able to put their knowledge to use; they need to interpret the meanings of others and express their own meanings *using* the knowledge they have acquired.

Like trends in other disciplines, this view of foreign language learning places the emphasis on *doing*, rather than *knowing about*. It recognizes that there is a role for the learning of skills and sub-skills, but this role is always defined within the larger context of skills integration at the *performance* level. For example, students learn the forms of verbs in the past tense not as an end in itself, but as a means to describe past events that have meaning for them. Similarly, new vocabulary is acquired in order to converse or write on a given topic. This approach stands in contrast to past practices in which grammar was taught in isolation or students memorized lists of vocabulary words that subsequently appeared on tests.

What students know about language might not always equate with their ability to demonstrate their knowledge. Students may "know" more than they can "do." "Doing" calls for integration of knowledge in various domains (such as vocabulary, syntax, morphology, intonation patterns, cultural meanings, and associations) with processes for understanding what others say or communicating one's own meanings (whether orally or in writing). For example, in reading foreign texts for meaning, learners must know the orthographic symbols of the language, the sound/symbol correspondences, the meanings of words, the meanings conveyed by word order and morphology (e.g., endings on verbs), and so on. This knowledge is integrated with reading strategies such as calling upon background knowledge (which can be topical, linguistic, or cultural), using contextual clues to deduce the meanings of unknown words, monitoring comprehension, hypothesizing (predicting information in the text), and testing hypotheses by comparing predictions with evidence in the text.

Students' competence—their knowledge in each of the domains described above—may exceed their ability to perform, that is, to integrate their knowledge and skills to derive meaning from the text. Similarly, students' knowledge of the elements of language is usually greater than their ability to produce fluent, comprehensible, and accurate utterances. This means, for example, that students may have memorized vocabulary lists and know the endings for a given verb in several tenses, but may still have difficulty extemporaneously producing fluent, coherent, accurate utterances, particularly in the early stages of language development.

Summary: Because performance is the ultimate goal of instruction, instructional time must be provided for students to practice using what they know. While development of skills continues to be an important element in foreign language learning, skill-using activities should be the primary focus. In the effective foreign language classroom, skill development takes place within the context of communicative language practice (performance) rather than in isolation.

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Principle 6: Language is inextricably bound to culture. Language use requires an understanding of the cultural context within which communication takes place. (Jayne Osgood)

Discussion: Preceding principles have suggested that language and culture are inextricably bound together. Indeed, what is the purpose of language, if not to express culture? Some might say culture is the language of a people. A sound base for effective communication will include not only linguistic competence but an ability to transmit oral communication in a correct cultural context. In fact, much of the literature suggests that cross-cultural communication requires having insight into culture and the society of its native speakers as well as manipulating the target language (Kitao 1991).

A clear understanding of the concept of culture clarifies its relationship to methodologies and pedagogies that are selected for each learning experience. An ability to weave linguistic and cultural elements into an effective teaching unit is fundamental to the success of any foreign language experience regardless of the grade level or language being taught.

Culture includes the ideas, customs, interactions, conflicts, arts, crafts, and technologies of people who claim a common identity. The effects of culture are seen in the behaviors, both intellectual and emotional, of that culture's members. Levels of intellectual and emotional involvement in the target culture are determined by the language learning experience. Inability to manipulate language hinders expression; hence, this inability presents a deeper interaction verbally.

Several curricular approaches can be used to construct a classroom environment that includes a well-woven pattern of linguistic and cultural experiences. In what is referred to as the proficiency-based curriculum, content is defined by how the language is to be used. The communicative purposes that learners will be expected to accomplish are specified. Context, function, and degree of accuracy are clearly delineated (Met 1988).

For the foreign language learner, the already existing language/culture connection is an overriding feature of native language competence. This fact is often taken for granted but it is important to note it and understand how it will permeate the foreign language learning experience. Highly individualized response patterns that are commonplace in the native language will emerge during the use of the foreign language.

Learners need instruction that helps them create this range of cultural responses in the target language. For example, students creating a dialogue to be shared with the rest of the class should be encouraged to focus on culturally authentic responses. The teacher might want to individualize instruction and coaching with students while they create such dialogues. Cooperative learning techniques can also be effective in this instance. Similarly, teachers might want to focus once a week on the rules of politeness within the target language, and reinforce that focus throughout the week's work. Examples of this focus include the use of the formal and the familiar forms of the equivalent of English "you" (*vous* versus *tu* in

Teaching and Learning K-12 Cultural Context

Authenticity

French, *tu* versus *usted* in Spanish) and so forth. Reading prose, poetry, and newspapers in the target language, regardless of level, is a rich way to understand the relationship between language and culture. Lively conversations should be encouraged!

Summary: Language teachers have known for decades about the importance of the relationship between the linguistics of a foreign language and the culture of its native speakers. Cultural involvement in a foreign language will increase as the learner progresses along a continuum of grammar into concrete use and involvement in the language. Total competence in a foreign language requires that foreign languages be taught in a culturally sensitive way, ultimately resulting in a culturally efficient, sensitive, and competent citizenry. Choices made in foreign language curricular and instructional design require attention to using the languages in today's ever-increasingly interdependent and multicultural world.

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Principle 8. The ability to perform with language is facilitated when students actively engage in meaningful, authentic, and purposeful language learning tasks. (Myriam Met)

**Teaching and Learning
K-12
Authentic Practice**

Discussion: The primary purpose of foreign language learning is to be able to use the language in the real-life situations most likely to be encountered. Authentic learning tasks are those that most closely approximate real-life situations. In real life, language is always used to convey meaning and for a purpose.

Rote or mechanical drills are usually meaningless, and often can be performed correctly even when students have no knowledge of the meanings involved. For example, a learner of English who knew that the third-person singular of past tense verbs is formed by adding -ed could correctly complete the following exercise: Mary (*to talk*) to Tom yesterday. Mary (*to phone*) Tom yesterday. Mary (*to gleep*) Tom yesterday. Further, in one sense, even the first two examples are meaningless, because students are not conveying meaning or information of their own, but rather information on topics and about people without real meaning to them.

Drill

Language learning tasks should require that an exchange of information be involved. Display questions, such as "Tom, what's your name? What color is your shirt? Is this a book?" are meaningless because both speaker and listener already have the information. In real life, most people would find it strange to be asked such questions. In contrast, information-gap tasks, in which one student provides information or needs it from another, are the kinds of tasks that characterize real-life communication involving the exchange of meaning. For instance, asking what color someone's shirt is can be meaningful if one is asking about a *new* shirt.

**Authentic Exchange
of Information**

Language use is also purposeful. Language is used to accomplish purposes such as making requests, providing information, making suggestions, stating and defending opinions, and so on. Learners need to engage in communicative activities that require them to listen or read to understand and respond to the purposes of others; or they may speak or write to express their own purposes. For example, given a recording (video or audio) students should be given a purpose for listening and understand what they may be expected to do with the results. Students may listen to get the gist of the message, listen for specific information, listen to infer

personality characteristics of the speaker, and so on. Reading purposes are often defined by the nature of the text. Students should understand the purposes associated with text types and the tasks they are asked to perform. For example, students may read a newspaper article for specific facts (who, what, where, etc.), a purpose that may require different reading strategies from reading a train schedule to determine the destination and time of departure of a specific train. When speaking and writing, students must understand the purpose for which they are constructing their message (to persuade? to express preferences?) and consider their audience. When students are asked to perform tasks that lack purpose, or when purposes are unclear, they are less likely to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for successful foreign language performance.

Authentic tasks are those that students are most like real-life situations. Mechanical verb drills are unauthentic because in real life one rarely conjugates all the forms of the verb in isolation and in a standard paradigm (I am, you are, he is, etc.) Reading and listening to contrived texts written specifically for foreign language learners are often unauthentic because the texts are rarely designed for the real-life purpose of communicating information; their purpose is to provide structured practice to language learners. Authentic writing tasks are those in which students communicate their own messages and purposes through print to an identified or imagined audience. Authentic writing almost never has as its purpose to use the conditional tense at least 12 times in 10 sentences, or to use at least half of the words on the vocabulary list in two paragraphs. Speaking tasks should parallel situations in which students might actually find themselves. In a role play in which students play the host, students may describe their home to a visiting foreign student. Pretending to be a real estate agent and describing your home in the foreign language to a potential buyer is meaningful, purposeful, but unauthentic for most K-12 learners.

Authentic Tasks vs Drill

Authenticity may also vary with the age and purposes of the learner. Seventh graders learning the numbers in French may not be expected to learn to spell correctly the words which represent the numerals. In real life, writing out number words is something done primarily on checks. Few 7th graders will ever write a check in French! In contrast, it is possible that older students might have this need when travelling abroad.

Summary: Foreign language learning is enhanced by the extent to which classroom tasks require meaning and purpose in authentic situations. It is possible for tasks to have meaning and purpose, but lack authenticity; or to have meaning but lack purpose or authenticity. While there is a role for a range of tasks in foreign language learning, the greater the attention to *all three* of these elements, the more likely it is that students will become proficient language users.

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