

If you have any other questions about helping your child to become bilingual, please speak to the EAL teacher in your school.

Helping Your Child to Become Bilingual

References

A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism

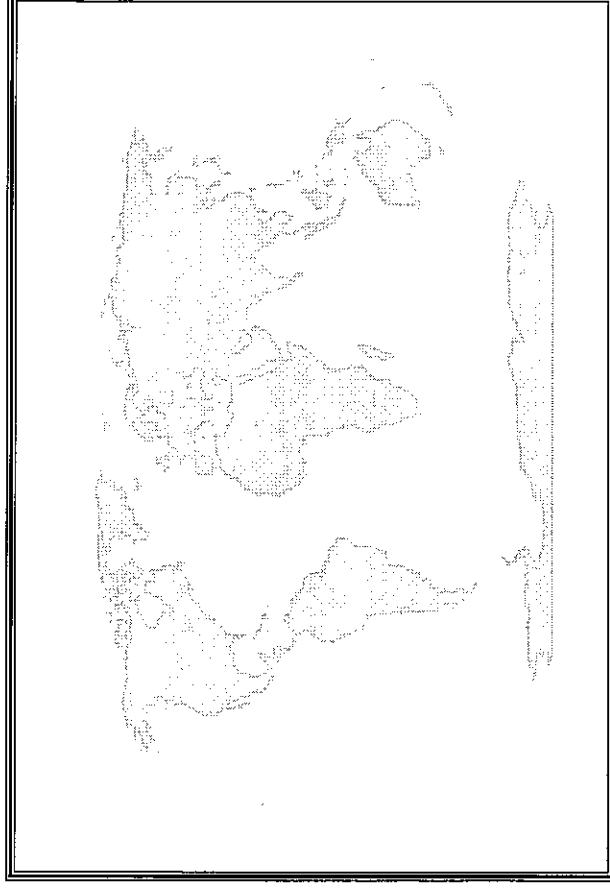
Baker, Colin, 1995

Learning in 2+ Languages

Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2005

Languages for Life: Bilingual Pupils 5-14

SCCC, 1994



How can I help my child to read and write in both languages?
Reading and writing tasks need to be interesting and relevant to your child's experience. Your child's class teacher or EAL teacher can suggest suitable topics and activities. It is also important to read for pleasure. This can be done using imaginative stories in both languages. Community language classes are also a good way of developing home language skills.

Our home language uses a different script. Will this confuse my child?

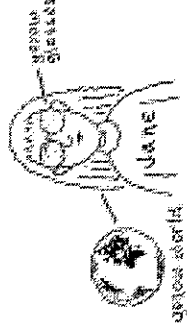
Learning to read and write in English is helped by learning to read and write in the home language. Children can successfully learn to write in two totally different scripts.

My child has problems with reading/writing/spelling in their home language. Will they have the same problems in English?
Some literacy problems do transfer from one language to another. The more information you can give your child's school and EAL teacher, the more they will be able to answer your specific questions and give appropriate support.

Will my child's performance in school be affected by being bilingual?

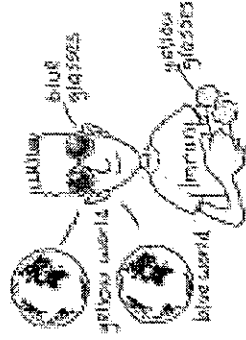
In the early stages of learning in English, your child may take more time to reach the standard they would achieve in their home language. However, in time and with motivation and support, they can achieve success. In fact, some bilingual pupils perform better than monolinguals in national tests.

How bilingual people perceive the world ¹



Jane has one pair of glasses with yellow-tinted lenses. To her, the world looks only yellow.

Imran has two pairs of glasses. One has yellow-tinted lenses. When he wears these, the world looks yellow. The other pair has blue-tinted lenses. When he wears these, the world looks blue. He has a choice of how to view the world - through yellow- or blue- tinted lenses. He can compare his perceptions of the world with the different shades and tones that the different lenses highlight. He can choose when to wear the different lenses, and can share perceptions of the world with other yellow-tinted spectacle wearers, or compare perceptions with those who wear blue or any colour of lens.



He can also wear the yellow and blue lenses at the same and experience the merging of the colours into green, but can recognise - unlike Jane - that the world is not yellow or blue or green but that the perception of the world depends very much on the lenses through which one views it. Further, Imran can share his kaleidoscopic-world view with Jane who is confined within her yellow-tinted picture of reality.

Why is it important to continue developing the home language?

It can take up to two years to develop social English. However, it can take up to ten years to fully develop the English language skills needed for education. Your child's first language "provides the best foundation for learning additional languages and new concepts." Continuing to develop your child's home language will allow them to develop concepts and reasoning, independently of their English language learning.

How can I help my child to develop our home language?

- Reading fact and fiction books with both your home language and English text (dual language books)
- Attending home language classes and schools
- Socialising in your home language community
- Discussing schoolwork in your home language
- Keeping in touch with your extended family
- Listening to radio and CDs and watching television and DVDs in your home language
- Looking at home language websites and doing e-learning activities

¹ Taken from *Learning in 2+ Languages*, Learning and Teaching Scotland 2005 originally in *Languages for Life: Bilingual Pupils 5-14*, SCCC 1994

Frequently asked questions

My English is not very good. Should I speak English with my child?

It is better to use your home language because you will provide a good model of the language. (Your child has many opportunities to hear English and to use it, outside the home.)

My child mixes the two languages. What should I do?

This is very common when a child is learning two languages at the same time. Your child will gradually begin to separate the two languages. The age and speed at which they do this varies greatly. If you are worried, speak to the EAL teacher.

Should I try to keep the two languages separate, for example one language inside the home and the other language outside the home?

In the early stages of learning another language, it is best to keep the two languages separate. It can be difficult to keep boundaries for each language but it will help your child to develop both languages without confusing them. Ask your EAL teacher for ideas.

What can I do when my child doesn't want to use the home language any more?

It is normal for children, especially teenagers to want to use English all the time because they want to fit in with their friends. Sometimes this rejection of the home language only lasts a short time. It is not advisable to try to force your child to use a particular language.

What does it mean to be 'bilingual'?

It is very common for children all over the world to grow up using more than one language. We use the term 'bilingual' for people who use more than one language in their daily lives. It does not mean that the person has equal skills in each language.

What are the advantages of being bilingual?

Culture

Speaking more than one language means that you experience more than one world: different ways of thinking, ideas and beliefs. The home language is very important for passing on values and traditions and maintaining cultural identity.

Family

The home language is usually the one which the child learns first, so it has a special value and is the most natural for expressing emotions. The home language is also important for maintaining relationships with family and friends.

Thinking power

Learning and using more than one language can improve creative thinking, problem-solving and expression.

Language

Bilingualism creates a better understanding of how language works and can make learning other languages easier.

Work opportunities

Many jobs and employers need people who can speak, read and write other languages.