



Multilingualism in Education – Bilingual Learners

Increased mobility and changing patterns of migration are having a major impact on education systems throughout the world. The need to equip all levels of the school workforce for working effectively with children who are new to the host country's language has been apparent for some time. It is not only children who are new to the host country who need support – bilingual learners do too. Growing up and living in a family where two or more languages are spoken changes linguistic ability and the way one learns. Bilingual learners thus have specific needs – and in particular require special resources for learning. These resources build the foundation of their development and learning.

This has often been interpreted primarily in terms of engaging with cultural diversity as part of good educational practice. The importance of engaging with linguistic diversity seems to have been clouded by misconceptions – e.g. that use of other languages will slow down the process of acquiring the host language – and by a lack of awareness that first language skills are the most important tools when learning a new language.

In most cities, regional or national politics and policies have not provided sufficient guidance, relevant professional development opportunities or resources to enable teachers to support bilingual children in learning the host language and using their home languages as a resource – not only for learning a language, but for understanding, building concepts and learning in general. The development and dissemination of good practice has largely depended on individual practitioners, institutions and professional associations.

Challenges

Bilingual learners vary greatly in terms of their linguistic competences, both in their home language and in the language used in education. Some of them are fluent in their home language but not literate, some have mastered literacy too. Some are new to the language used in education and others might be competent in terms of everyday language but need support with academic language.

In large European cities diversity is a major fact of life. In inner-city London for example, over 50% of school children have English as an additional language, and in some schools the percentage of bilingual speakers can be as high as 70%. This is the trend in many urban centres in Europe. On the other hand, schools where bilingual children are in small numbers have even less expertise or resources available to support them in learning the host language or using their home languages as a resource. Although pockets of good practice exist, schools struggle to find the best way to teach the host language and provide access to the full curriculum for these children. There is very little support from initial teacher training and professional development for teachers and school leaders.

One can observe practices based on misconceptions of 'the bilingual learner', which may be well intentioned but are actually counterproductive. Perhaps the biggest challenge for the integration of bilingual children into mainstream schools are practices of placing them in low ability sets. They are mainly perceived through the lens of what they cannot do in the host language, instead of being recognised for their potential as learners with a bilingual experience. These children are not given opportunities to demonstrate and express what they are good at and can do. This impacts on their self-esteem and may lead to disengagement and truanting. It also ignores the difference between cognitive potential and the possibility to express oneself in a specific way. It thus hinders children from learning over and beyond language learning.

Advantages

Yet schools that are able to integrate children from a different language background can provide some of the most successful educational experiences for all of their pupils. The relative success of inner London schools is a striking example of this. These schools are places where all children can learn tolerance, mutual respect and to appreciate a diverse world. Pupils also get an idea of the variety of languages spoken in the world and an understanding that every language has its worth. This can also increase motivation for learning new languages and help the children to develop strategies for language learning.

For the bilingual children themselves, research conducted in a range of countries in Europe and beyond provides evidence that children who are supported to develop bilingually and whose first language is integrated into structured learning have the chance to

- learn the language of the host country in a more sustainable way and often faster;
- perform better across the curriculum, especially in mathematics;
- be good at learning other languages.

More recent research also reveals that adults who have used two or more languages throughout their lives will be able to delay the onset of dementia.¹

Broken links, corrections and updates can be reported and viewed at www.urbanlanguages.eu/toolkits/errata

¹ For more information concerning research and ideas about multilingualism please contact LUCIDE – enquiries@urbanlanguages.eu

Part 1: Engaging with prior knowledge

The most relevant prior knowledge when learning a new language is our first (home) language – an increasing number of children grow up with more than two languages, e.g. if the parents have different language backgrounds and a third language is spoken in the environment. Further information on research on linguistic diversity can be found at <http://www.languageonthemove.com/>

Bi- and multilingual children need to be encouraged to draw on the knowledge and experience they bring to school from their home environment.

Ideas for teachers



How can I facilitate their bilingual experiences as a resource for the bilingual children themselves?

How can their bilingual experiences become a resource for all children?

What can I do to create a linguistically rich school and classroom environment that reflects the community of learners I teach and encourages bilingual development?

How do I promote the idea that all languages are of equal value and that each pupil's home language is important and interesting?

How do I promote the idea that linguistic diversity is not only normal, but also enriching and pleasurable?



The “Curriculum Mehrsprachigkeit”² (Curriculum on Multilingualism) provides aims and exercises to emphasise multilingualism and make use of the language resources present in the classroom. The Curriculum (or parts of it) can be integrated into the regular curriculum. It is written in German.

A number of ideas for dealing with linguistic diversity in a mainstream classroom can be found online, for example:

The [Council of Europe language education policy](#)³

The [European Centre for Modern Languages Graz](#)⁴ (Austria)

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/many-languages-many-cultures>



Start by making a record of the home languages spoken by children, parents and teachers/school staff. Consider making this visible in some attractive way, such as “Our languages” displays in common areas and classrooms.

2 http://oesz.at/OESZNEU/main_03.php?page=0324

3 http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Division_en.asp

4 <http://www.ecml.at/>



An example from Madrid:



An example from Hamburg: "Good morning" in the languages of the preschool children:





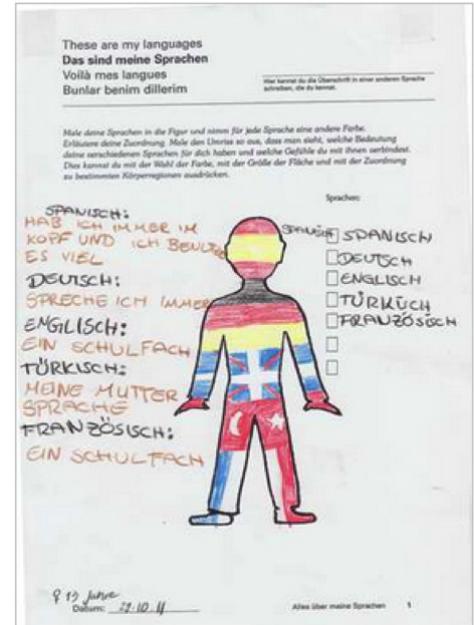
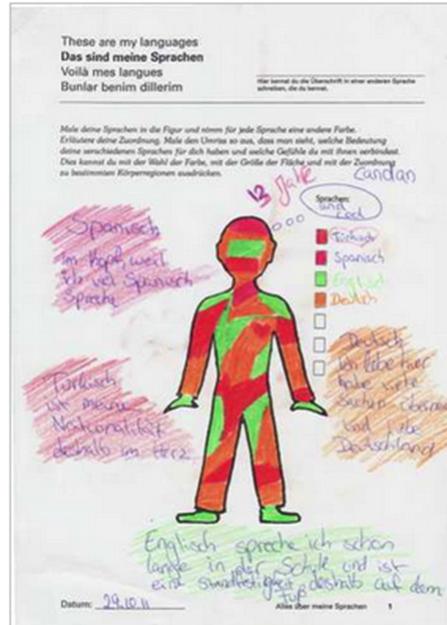
Here is an example of a Language Tree from Scoil Bhríde Cailíní, Dublin, with language learning accomplishments in English as the branches, and home languages as the roots, demonstrating how English as an Additional Language can be supported through multilingual language learning and sustained language awareness initiatives that receive whole-school support. (permission obtained from Dr Déirdre Kirwan):





Make use of language portraits – let the children explain their linguistic experience, knowledge and feelings in suitable ways.

These are examples from 10-13 year old children in Germany. The children are invited to sketch their language portrait: “Which languages do you ‘have’...?”. The open question allows them to answer in any way they like. The portraits can be used to decorate a school or classroom – but they can also be the starting point for learning about linguistic diversity, the functions of languages, the way children see themselves linguistically, etc.



In the “languages of the month project” each month a language spoken by a child in school is introduced and promoted throughout the school. Pupils from other countries present their language, simple words and phrases by video: <http://www.newburypark.redbridge.sch.uk/langofmonth/>



A good instrument to start raising awareness of the languages pupils speak and how they feel about them is the European Language Portfolio. The [website of the Council of Europe](#)⁵ contains valuable information on its development, as well as on how to use it. The portfolios can be displayed in the classroom as a record of achievement.



Performances are also a good way of promoting the linguistic diversity present at school. Children of the European School in The Hague performed a play in which they travelled through different countries using Dutch, English, French, German and Spanish.



An example from Hamburg:

A multilingual group of 14-20 year olds rehearsed a multilingual stage play together with the artistic director of a small private theatre and coaches from the University of Hamburg. With the support of a broadcasting station, they transferred the play to a radio where it was actually broadcast.

More information on the project can be found at <http://www.lima.uni-hamburg.de/index.php/en/knowledge-transfer/knowledge-transfer-projects/346-schrille-post-ein-grosstaedisches-palaver>



Encourage children to talk about their languages, how they are different and how they are similar.



An Austrian project developed the “Sprachensteckbriefe” (Language briefings), which provide background information on the main languages spoken in Europe/Austria. They give a short overview on where the language is spoken, its history and structure. For each language, reading and audio examples are given.



Make sure that you have bilingual or multilingual pictures, dictionaries and other types of reference books in languages your learners use.

Give positive messages to children by encouraging them to use the bilingual resources available and to bring their own bilingual dictionaries and books.



Even for very young children, the presence and active use of bi- or multilingual books is an enriching experience as it helps raise their language awareness and their linguistic self-esteem.

A special way to produce such material was developed in South Africa: Little Books for Little Hands. Each Little Hands Book contains a picture story – the texts are provided in a number of languages from Afrikaans to Xitsonga, which can be printed out and pasted into the little books.

See <http://www.littlehandstrust.com/books.html>



Create a multilingual word bank for different topics in the curriculum. A bank like this can be used and further developed over many years. Parents and other staff members may also be able to help.

Display and refer to key words and phrases, metaphors etc. in different languages spoken by children in your class at the beginning of each new unit/topic.



Encourage children to do their class work (especially group work) and homework in their strongest language – let them decide if they want to use their home language(s) during partner or group work which aims at understanding a task or problem. Encourage them to make comparisons between expressions in their home language and the host language – even if you as a teacher don't speak the home languages. Trust the children and encourage them to experience themselves as successful learners.



Encourage the use of media in other languages for all children. For example, when studying literature use film versions of the relevant stories or novels with subtitles.



School libraries could make available: bilingual books and resources, DVDs of films based on literature relevant to the curriculum (for example, films based on Shakespeare's plays with subtitles); newspapers and magazines published in different languages.



A number of libraries also give online support for the development of multilingual collections of children's books and other media. See for example:

<http://www.vpl.ca/library/cat/C1007/C1007>

http://www.helmet.fi/en-US/Libraries_and_services/Multilingual_Library

<http://dfb.deichman.no/>

By using these examples, you can probably convince your local library to develop a multilingual collection or expand the one they have!



Let parents know the importance you attach to language development in the home language:

- Encourage them to read and write with their children in both languages, to make books and resources in their home language(s), to inspire and help their children to make their own books.
- Encourage parents and children to take qualifications in their home languages. Successfully passing an exam gives children and families official recognition of their language. Furthermore, the development of literacy in the home languages opens up rich possibilities for their future prospects, for example when pursuing a career in a multilingual field.

Ideas for school leaders



What can I as a school leader do to make use of and develop the multilingual resources of the pupils at my school?



Make sure your staff understand the importance of drawing on bilingual children's prior experience and knowledge. Explain that engaging with pupils' home languages is part of teaching and learning every day!

The following arguments underpinned by research evidence can be used:

- Home language proficiency helps with acquisition of other languages;
- Children who continue using their home language in learning demonstrate better achievement across the curriculum.

Organise sessions for staff where they can exchange multilingual resources they have, such as word banks, dictionaries, reference books and web-based resources etc.

- Support your staff in gaining expertise, knowledge and skills, e.g. by inviting experts as coaches or trainers to the school.



Develop a mission-statement, making your mission as a multilingual school explicitly known to all members of the school community, to visitors, school authorities, the local community... make language diversity a signature feature of your school.



Make sure that your school provides opportunities for children to gain qualifications in their home languages. Make sure children and parents are aware of available qualifications and actively encourage them to make use of such opportunities.



In Strasbourg, a local inspector for heritage languages carried out a survey involving all parents (from all language backgrounds) about their willingness to enrol their children in the heritage language classes offered in the city.



In Strasbourg, a pilot was launched to assess the level of heritage language learners at the end of the school year. The levels were linked to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment. This language assessment scheme complements the usual assessment schemes of schools. Heritage language learners and their parents see their competences recognised and valued.



Make school brochures, key letters and information available in the languages of the school population, as far as possible. For this purpose, cooperate not only with 'official' partners but also with parents or other partners from language communities.



In Dublin, information on the Irish education system has been translated into different languages for the parents of newcomer children. The Department of Education and Skills provides information on its website for newcomer parents in English, Irish, German, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Spanish and Russian, and the National Parents Council has produced a brochure entitled "Your Child in the Primary School System" available in English, French, Arabic, Russian and Chinese, and to be published in Urdu.



Make sure that your school policy includes principles of good practice with bi- or multilingual children with guidelines and examples of classroom strategies. Make this a regular part of staff development to be updated regularly.



Encourage members of staff and pupils to have their own “Language Passport”. Display examples of language passports can be found here:

<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/european-skills-passport/language-passport>



Examples:

[European Council guidelines for global education](#)⁶
(available in different languages):

[British Council European INDIE project](#)⁷ in schools & subsequent guidelines for diversity and inclusion with examples.

Germany’s Goethe Institut developed a programme called “[Multilingualism – Languages Without Borders](#)”⁸. Its website contains a lot of examples and information about linguistic diversity and the promotion of multilingualism (available in four languages).

Ideas for parents



How can I as a parent support my child and other children in developing their home language?

6 <http://nscglobaleducation.org/index.php/resource-center/item/126-global-education-guidelines>

7 http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/UDRW/images/items/docl_19261_940093589.pdf

8 <http://www.goethe.de/ges/spa/prj/sog/enindex.htm>



Many parents are very focussed on supporting their children to learn the host language. Often there is a lack of advice on how important it is to maintain and further develop one's home language as well. Therefore, some parents avoid the use of other languages at home, thinking this will help their child to learn the majority language as quickly as possible. But this is actually counterproductive.

Here is a link to a multilingual parenting website which provides very simple and common-sense advice for parents who speak different languages:

<http://multilingualparenting.com/2014/02/26/12-things-parents-raising-bilingual-children-need-to-know/>

Information and ideas about bringing up a child bilingually [can be found here](#)⁹.

Other projects offer support for parents, for example "family literacy" projects that offer materials and strategies for the support of home languages – often in cooperation with kindergartens and schools.



In the German "Rucksack" project¹⁰ parents are equipped with materials which mirror the literacy activities of the school. Whereas the school activities take place in the majority language, these complementary parents' materials and activities use the home language.



Offer to assist with translating key words, phrases and labels around the school and classroom. Participate in lessons by teaching examples of your languages, words and phrases to the class. Talk about your home language. Offer to contribute to multilingual activities and events the school is organising.

One example from Germany:

A number of schools have 'special reading time', which takes place every day for 20 minutes or so. All members of the school community – children, teachers, head teachers, classroom assistants, caretakers – read a text of their choice. Parents take part in this if they have the time. The schools have established that parents or older pupils or other members of the language communities that are present in a school gather in small groups and read aloud to children who choose this, or support children to read in different languages themselves. Here, not only the children who speak a certain language are included but everybody who is interested in listening to or reading in the different languages of the school.



Engage in any offer of home language education at your child's school. Speak up for the establishment of home language classes. See if you can engage in those lessons by telling stories, reading poems or presenting topics in your home language.

Find out if your child can get a qualification in your home language. If not, talk to the staff at school and encourage them to provide such opportunities.



Support your children in developing further skills in their home language through activities within the family and community (story-telling and reading, attending a complementary school and other community activities that provide opportunities for home language use).

⁹ http://www.multilingualchildren.org/getting_started/tensteps.html

¹⁰ <http://rucksack-griffbereit.1raa.de/>



Make use of multilingual media, blogs, Skype – get ideas [from this website](#).¹¹

Ideas for teacher trainers



How can I prepare my trainees to work with linguistically diverse communities of learners?



Make skills and competences based on principles of good practice with bilingual learners integral to teacher training. Make future teachers aware of the specific language challenges inherent in particular subject matters.



Invite key educators, researchers and practitioners to talk to student teachers on good practice with bilingual learners.



Assign tasks to student teachers that will lead to better understanding of the experience of bilingual learners, such as shadowing a learner for a day.



Introduce student teachers to ways of identifying pupils' abilities and experience in their home language.

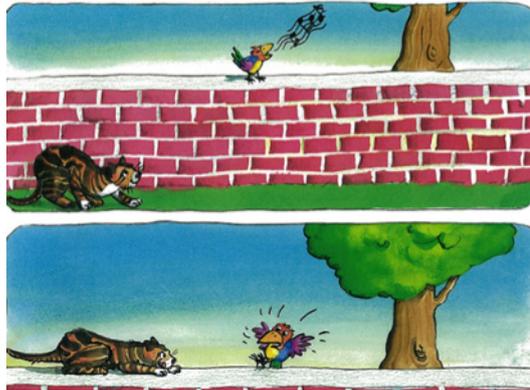
¹¹ <http://multilingualparenting.com/2014/05/25/raising-multilingual-children-blogging-carnival-how-technology-can-help-you-bring-up-a-bilingual-child/>



One example from Germany:

An instrument for identifying children's ability to tell a story was developed in German and six other languages. Children tell the story twice – first in their home language, and in German a week later. The stories are audio-taped. The analysis in the home languages is carried out by teachers from the language communities. The result is a language profile with a comparison of what children CAN DO in both their languages.

KATZE UND VOGEL



Raise awareness that good practice with bilingual learners is good practice for all learners.



Introduce student teachers to examples of good practice and strategies that utilise the linguistic resources of adults and children in the school community to their own benefit and benefit of others.

Part 2: Engaging with human resources

With the increasing numbers of bilingual children in schools and other education contexts, there are also increasing numbers of bilingual adults such as teachers, school leaders, teaching assistants, office staff and parents. The tips below show how bilingual adults can be deployed and used to the benefit of students' educational success.

What can teachers do?



Plan with your bilingual colleagues and bilingual teaching assistants how they can best use the languages they speak in joint projects and classroom practice:

- to discuss progress with children
- to assess children's knowledge in their home language
- to reach out to parents who speak the same language



Encourage interested parents to participate in school life, relevant projects and extra-curricular activities.



In Scoil Bhríde Cailíní in Dublin, parents are actively encouraged to participate in the life of the school, and all languages spoken are described as the school's unofficial languages, bolstered through multilingual signage and dual language reading books. The school encourages parents and children to speak their own language at home, and bilingual parents help to translate letters from the school into the various other languages spoken by the school community, maximising the involvement of parents in school life.



Some communities have their own radio stations or programmes, such as the [Bangladeshi community in London](http://www.betarbangla.net)¹². Modern technology makes this station available outside of the UK. Use such programmes from around the world to promote projects and activities done in partnership between schools and parents and local communities.

¹² <http://www.betarbangla.net>



In London, the [Translation Nation project](http://translation-nation.herokuapp.com/)¹³ nurtures children's inherent linguistic capabilities. Working in small groups under the guidance of literary translators, children translate stories that their parents have shared with them from their home languages into clear, vivid English. The process introduces the children to literary fiction and by including music and performance, children find it easy to become engaged and the workshops encourage a more thoughtful, confident, nuanced and imaginative approach to writing in English. By sharing their languages with their peers, students become fascinated by the different worlds that language can create and develop a respect for those with linguistic ability. Parents are able to find new ground on which to communicate with their children and build a bridge between their childhood and their child's. Schools are able to offer parents different ways of becoming involved within the school community and teachers become inspired to adopt more creative ways to engage with their students.

What can school leaders do?



Ensure that your recruitment strategies encourage applications and reach out to communities which reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of your pupil population.



Community newspapers and magazines in different languages should be used to recruit staff from a variety of relevant communities.



Encourage staff to utilise their skills in other languages in classroom work and school activities, with guidance and examples provided in the school policy.



Communicate to parents the relevance and importance of their contribution to school activities.



Find ways of recognising parents' contributions: initiate a parent(s) of the week display. If possible this should be done in several languages in order to encourage parents who do not speak the host language to contribute too.



Create the roles of cultural and linguistic mediators/home school liaison workers to assist schools in linguistic matters and act as a bridge between the school and parents from different communities.



In Hamburg, heritage language teachers are assigned two functions: language teachers and cultural mediators (“Kulturmittler”). For this task they are granted extra hours by the school authority. In their function as cultural mediators they are counsellors to parents (e.g. on how to support the child’s learning, job orientation, advising on how the school system works, why heritage lessons are important), translators (of school letters, at parent days, at parent evenings), organisers (intercultural projects, parent cafes).



In Rome, the *Polo Intermundia* project, funded by the Education and School Office of the City Council, aiming to encourage intercultural exchange and integration between newly arrived and settled Italian communities, involves all citizens, schools and associations of the city centre in activities such as:

- Courses in Italian as a foreign language for newly arrived parents and their children, continued education on the languages of their countries of origin, computer classes, intercultural seminars, leisure activities for children.
- Also cultural-linguistic mediators are provided in schools to facilitate communication between teachers and parents.

What can parents do?



Offer to volunteer and support relevant projects and activities in schools.

Attend school events. Provide feedback to the school on translated materials, where available.



Find out about opportunities for parents to join school bodies such as the teacher-parent association.

What can children and young people do?



Bilingual children and young people can be asked to take on the role of a ‘buddy’ to a child who is new to school and often new to the host language. If done well, this is a very helpful strategy which supports inclusion of new children and it also results in development of new skills for the child who takes the role of a ‘buddy’. For such a role children should be well prepared by adults, have a clear list of responsibilities and expectations and receive reward.

What can teacher trainers do?



You could have a key role in motivating bilingual students to become teachers, and encourage the teacher trainees in their studies. Make them aware of any courses that help them in specific features of academic study (scientific writing etc.)



The German Hertie Foundation provides scholarships for teacher students with a migrant background. Those students receive financial support and qualification courses throughout their studies. Students can apply if they themselves or their parents were born outside Germany.



The *Schreibwerkstatt Mehrsprachigkeit* (Multilingualism writing workshop) at the University of Hamburg provides assistance for bilingual students in academic writing in German. They offer regular writing workshops, peer assistance, free writing time and a collection of material on how to write the Bachelor/Master thesis.



Prepare student teachers for working with bilingual children through discussion that bilingualism is an asset and a resource, and by introducing them to examples of good practice which utilise the linguistic resources of children and adults in the school community.

Part 3: Learning a host language and learning in the host language

Schools should be aware of the need to provide help for new arrivals to acquire the main language of schooling – or “host” language. Provision is usually made for this – in many cases as a legal obligation.

Please also refer to the [LUCIDE toolkit on Learning New Languages](#)¹⁴, which contains further ideas and suggestions on this.

Less consistent, however, is the way that bilingual pupils are supported in learning to use and understand the language of schooling – the subject-specific terminologies, and structures and types of texts or ways to express a task or problem, all of which are needed for academic progress.

What can teachers do?



It has been said that “every lesson is a language lesson”. Make the subject-specific language a topic in your lessons to make sure that every student understands what is being taught – give them access to the specific language of a task. This will be useful for all pupils.



The FörMig centre at the University of Hamburg has published [comprehensive information and teaching materials](#)¹⁵ on the principles of continuous language education (Durchgängige Sprachbildung) and academic language (Bildungssprache).



The UK's [National Literacy strategy](#)¹⁶ produced lesson planning toolkits, video recordings of classroom practice and separate booklets for each curriculum area which support teachers in focusing on literacy across the curriculum.



Placing a newly arrived child in a low ability group because of lack of skills in the host language does not provide the best results in terms of language development, cognitive development, self-esteem or attainment across the curriculum.

If a child has knowledge on biosynthesis in another language s/he only needs to be helped to transfer that knowledge to a new language; they do not need to ‘learn’ knowledge they already have!



If you need to assess the ability of a newly arrived child, non-verbal tests can be used or alternatively assessment should be conducted in the language the child is most proficient in, i.e. the home language or the language of prior education.

14 www.urbanlanguages.eu/toolkits

15 <http://www.foermig.uni-hamburg.de/web/de/all/mat/ltdb/FMMaterial/index.html>

16 <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20131216163513/https://www.education.gov.uk/schools/toolsandinitiatives/nationalstrategies>



A child starting to use a new language should be allowed to mix and switch their languages. For example, if a child is working on an extended piece of writing (a letter or essay), think of allowing them to use their other language in the process of writing. Once they complete the piece of writing, help them produce a version in the host language with the use of a dictionary. This will help maintain their flow of thinking and confidence.



Children learning a new language need small group settings to develop their spoken language and gain confidence in their language use. Remember to encourage and praise their language development.



“Scaffolding” is a useful strategy, and not only with new arrivals. Scaffolding is the provision of appropriate assistance to students in order that they may achieve what alone would have been too difficult for them. Visual scaffolding is support that includes images and words that can be seen as well as heard, and is an excellent way to provide comprehensible input to newly arrived students so that not only will they learn the essential subject content but also they will make progress in their language acquisition.



On [this website](#)¹⁷ from the Frankfurt International School you will find useful suggestions for scaffolding in practice:

What can school leaders do?



Ensure appropriate assessment for new arrivals, conducted in the most proficient language or using non verbal tests. Assess their competence in the school language in order to make adequate provision for their support.



In Hamburg, every child is tested before entering school for several abilities, including language. This shows if a child has a sufficient command of German in order that appropriate support can be put in place.



Establish an induction period (recommended 6 weeks) for all new arrivals with staff who have had relevant training.



Provide opportunities for all staff to have professional development to be able to implement “language sensitive lessons”. Create working groups and meetings for staff to be able to exchange their experiences and to discuss the skills needed for working with new arrivals.



In some regions of Germany, teachers are encouraged to acquire basic skills in one or two of the home languages that are present in a school community. This does not necessarily help them to be fluent in a language, but it gives ideas about the structural principles, the relation between sound and written form, etc. Even if the result is only a little mastery of the language, the efforts of teachers are appreciated by children and parents as signals of their recognition of linguistic diversity.

17 <http://esl.fis.edu/teachers/fis/scaffold/page1.htm>



You might also find opportunities to get involved in intensive language programmes with other schools or local institutions.



In Toronto, schools enrol pupils whose first language is neither English nor French in French immersion programmes. Ten schools of the Toronto District School Board offer French immersion from kindergarten to secondary school. The number of students enrolled in these French programmes has increased from 15,000 in 2000 to 21,000 in 2011, and application numbers are growing.



Try to involve parents in the language education of their children.



Appoint a member of staff in charge of monitoring attainment and integration of new arrivals.

What can parents do?



Do exercises with your children at home to support their language and writing skills.



In Hamburg the Family Literacy Project supports parents to read and write with their children at home. Teachers support the parents and provide them with information, materials, books and games. It is much encouraged to include the home language in those activities. The project was run by the institute for in-service training of teachers in Hamburg. [See the material here](http://li.hamburg.de/family-literacy/)¹⁸.



In Holland, families can engage with the *VoorleesExpress* ('Reading Express'). It is a project in which a volunteer visits families with young children who need to improve their Dutch (ages 2-8) – very often children whose home language is an ethnic minority language. The volunteer visits the families on a regular basis during a period of 20 weeks. Reading to children not only stimulates the children's imagination, it also enhances their linguistic sensitivity and it enlarges their vocabulary. Research has shown that primary school children who are used to being read to at home have a larger vocabulary than children who are never read any books, even if the reading takes place in a language other than the host language.

18 <http://li.hamburg.de/family-literacy/>

What can young people do?



Children and young people are the core of this process. Sometimes they are not aware of the best strategies they can use in terms of independent learning. Children who have already themselves been through the process of learning the host language could support new arrivals in a number of ways:

- Produce a welcome booklet with advice and their own experiences: “What helped me?”
- Contribute to lunch time and after school clubs using their experiences to support new arrivals
- Act as reading partners and engage in shared reading activities

What can teacher trainers do?



Teacher trainers need to ensure that teacher trainees are equipped with a range of pedagogical approaches which can be used to improve the progress and attainment of different groups of bilingual learners such as:

- Language sensitive education
- Scaffolding as well as extending the language and curricular learning for bilingual learners
- Awareness of inclusion and equality of opportunity issues specific to bilingual learners
- Key national educational initiatives and policy relating to new arrivals and bilingual learners
- Key national and international examples of good practice
- Strategies which will help develop academic proficiency based on the principle of “continuous language education”



In some institutions student teachers’ awareness of language issues is enhanced through use of the [European Language Portfolio](#)¹⁹.

Conclusion

This toolkit is conceptualised and designed around three main issues:

1. Engaging with prior knowledge: in this case the home (first) language and culture.
2. Engaging with human resources: bilingual adults and bilingual children and young people in the school community
3. Learning a host language and learning in a host language: every child new to the host language is not only learning the host language but s/he is learning everything else in a new language.

Speaking and living in more than one language is not a deficit or problem, but a potential and an asset in an increasingly internationalised world. Education should do everything it can to enhance linguistic diversity and help all members of the school community to realise and enjoy their linguistic capital.

We hope that by addressing these issues and using some of the suggested strategies and activities, schools (and other education institutions) will secure the conditions to develop their own style of good practice shaped around their own contexts and school communities.

If you want to share any of your experiences or to comment in any way please contact us:

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