

**THE ROLE OF BILINGUAL SUPPORT:  
An Evaluation and It's Effectiveness**

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**Abstract**

The discussion will be divided into four sections. The first section, the introduction, discusses the rationale which underlines the project and the background, purpose and limitations of the topic being discussed. In section two, the discussion is focused on the review of literature and relevant research studies. The research methodology is presented in section three, and will cover data analysis and procedures of the study. Finally, conclusions will be drawn in section four.

**Key words:** Bilingual Support

**Introduction**

This paper will report on an evaluation of the effectiveness of the role of bilingual support for minority students in both primary and secondary schools in Sheffield. In evaluating the process of the role of the language support, it becomes increasingly evident that bilingual support is important not only for students in helping them to cope with their learning process, but also for teachers as well as the parents who are all called 'Stakeholders', but most importantly for the agent of the program administrator.

It is the bilingual support who bridge the students between teacher and the classroom activities, particularly at the very initial period of the student learning process. It is also the instructor's role to negotiate with and to explain to both student and parents objectives or goals as well as classroom activities. Equally important, it is also the role of this bilingual support instructor to gather feedback from the program which can be measured against the administrator's aims.

**1.1. Rationale**

It is 4 years since Sheffield promoted the key ideas of being a 'Multilingual City' where the stated objective was that by the year 2004, every young person would be fluent in English and another language.

### **What is a Multilingual City?**

A Multilingual City is one where different languages become part of the organic development of the community as a whole. It is where these languages are spoken both in public and in education. Nowadays, in Sheffield schools, there are 57 different languages spoken. Some of the key languages spoken in the city, apart from English, include Urdu/Punjabi, Bengali, Creole/Patois, Somali, Arabic, Polish, Cantonese, Pushto and Spanish. Therefore, by considering the large variety of languages used, the city stipulated the program to establish the use of native language in parallel with English as the major language, particularly for those who are still in need of education. In other words, we can say that it was established to promote "the notion that over a period of 10 years or so, every youngster living in Sheffield should be 'bilingual' that is speak English and any other language fluently" (Sheffield Multilingual City Conference Report)

In accordance with this objective, the initiative has brought together people from different organizations through 'action teams' to work together to this end. They gathered information about language teaching and encouraged the development of the project. Besides this, it also encourages young people leaving school and adults to use their language skills confidently in work as well as in cultural activities. It supports research on language learning and language use that promotes better understanding of what is currently happening, and helps develop proposals for future improvement (ibid. p. 3).

In order to put the objective into realization, the partners in the multilingual city initiative are working closely together and include the Sheffield City Council; some organizations from outside the city; and later some other organizations and authorities. One of these is the 'LEA' ( Local Education Authority). The LEA, besides offering support to its other partners, is also developing its own projects one of which is called 'SUMES' which was at its initial time mainly working with nursery schools to start an early mother and toddler language learning project. Later, in its development, much of the work has focused on primary and secondary schools, and most of these are primary schools which have not taught a language other than English for a long time. It was supported by 2 considerations, one of which was the thought that learning a language has been too long regarded as an academic subject rather than a means of communication; and the other reason was that, besides English, which is already central language within Europe, we need to understand other European languages.

### **What Is SUMES and How Does It Work?**

SUMES stands for Sheffield Unified Multicultural Educational Service. It was set up in January 1987, as part of the Authority's Strategy to improve the educational provision to the city's black population.

Its formation was, therefore, long before the Multilingual City Initiative which began in 1994. SUMES is the Education Department's programme to give direct support to black pupils, students and communities, and it was first developed to respond to many black people's complaints that the Education system was neglecting their language, cultures and experiences. Their objection was due to the fact that the whole learning process was totally in English.

In running the service, SUMES (in its Service Charter) has a mission to work with schools to improve access to learning and increase achievement of black students, improve links between parents, communities and schools, and to provide support for educational establishments. Moreover, to provide the service SUMES has the aims and responsibility to work with the black community to identify its educational needs; work with schools to provide direct support for black students; promote equal opportunity for black people; increase educational and training opportunity for black people and provide pastoral support for black students; involve black community organisations in the provision of education for their children; organize training for SUMES staff to achieve greater effectiveness and seek black community participation in the planning and developing of SUMES and other educational services.

### **1.2. Purpose of the Study**

It was stated that the aim of support teaching was "to enable pupils to gain access to the whole curriculum through in-class support or/and with drawl". SUMES staff helps students with language acquisition, and working closely with the class teachers.

This aim was, then, translated into a number of roles as the following:  
- work closely with the class teacher; device appropriate teaching materials for bilingual pupils; translation and interpretation of relevant curriculum materials for pupils; home-school liaison; pastoral care; and advising school and colleagues about cultural and religious differences. However, this study was stressed on the first 5 points only.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the role of bilingual support worker in the educational setting which was based on the aims and policy stated.

### **1.3. Limitation and Delimitation**

It was realized that by encouraging an approach to evaluative study, particularly on such a big project - Multilingual City or SUMES-, which takes account of the complexities of context, tasks and methods of support worker would be very comprehensible and relevant to many different stakeholders. Therefore, these standards must be met by any research which seeks to be useful for policy makers, practitioners and for users. As a consequence, there must be a collaborative enterprise in the identification of data and conclusion. Those ideal concept, however, could not be put into practice due to a number of factors such as; the lack of time and expertise, particularly in formulating the research



question and determining the appropriate research design; the difficulty in identifying the subjects, for the study also dealt with other individuals or stakeholders; and also a delay because students had many activities in preparation for their Christmas party.

Therefore, this study was limited only to the evaluation of the role of the bilingual support worker, who was then called an 'instructor', in her routine. It was not intended to meet all the internal or external ethical and professional obligations of the broader project of Multilingual City or SUMES for instance, rather to evaluate the empirical evidence about the effectiveness of the bilingual support policies and programmes from the 5 categories that have been characterized above.

## **2. The Review of Literature**

As has already been discussed the purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the role of the bilingual support in accordance with the underlined-roles she had to manage in order to satisfy the objective of Multilingual City Initiative in general and of SUMES in particular.

**"Once upon a time there was a word. And the word was evaluation. And the word was good. Teacher used the word in a particular way. Later on, other people used the word in a different way. After a while, nobody knew for sure what the word meant. But they all knew it was a good word. Evaluation was a thing to be cherished. But what kind of a good thing was it? More important, what kind of a good thing is it?" (Popham 1975,p.1).**

Evaluation can be mentioned in many ways. In general, we can give a definition of evaluation as to 'appraise something's value or quality'. This means that we are constantly evaluating all aspect of our life and work, to such an extent that we rarely notice that we are doing so. According to Gronlund (1981, in Nunan 1992 p. 184) , and Dickins (1992), evaluation may be defined as a systematic process of determining the extent to which instructional objectives are achieved by pupils. There are two important aspects of this definition. First, that evaluation implies a systematic process which rejects casual, uncontrolled observation of pupils. Second, evaluation assumes that instructional objectives have been previously identified.

For centuries the term evaluation has been always associated with classrooms, teachers, and students. Even for most educators, the idea of evaluation was equivalent to the idea of testing and then followed by grading. Later in recent decades, however, people began to use the notion in a different way. Evaluation is typically focused on the particular educational program. The kind of educational evaluation that we are concerned with this time is a very formal or systematic one. For example, it engages in discipline enquiry, uses special measurement devices, then analyzes the data systematically and describes the endeavours in formal reports (Willey, in Nunan 1992). So the heart of the definition involves an appraisal of quality ( Popham 1975 p.7).

Despite much apparently straight forward use of the word, 'effectiveness' is not something that can be easily observed and measured (Cheetham et al. 1992 p.7). Like any other data, empirical evidence about the effectiveness of programmes is a product of data collection procedures and the assumptions on which they are based. The concept of effectiveness derives from particular ways of thinking and makes sense only in relation to its context. We can ask questions like: "Is what we are doing having the effect we are hoping for?". Furthermore, they say "the effectiveness of an activity may be studied without proceeding to a statement about what value might be given to it by various parties; but an activity cannot be evaluated without some knowledge of its outcomes and effectiveness (ibid. p.9). The effectiveness of a programme will include the content, frequency and content meetings, the types of services provided, and contact with other agencies or service providers (stakeholders) (see Bailey 1978). Stakeholders, here, means the the partners in the Multilingual City such as; Sheffield City Council, University of Sheffield, etc. ( Sheffield Multilingual 2 p. 4). Here the interest is not only with what actually happened but also with how closely what happened corresponded to what had been planned.

#### **Bilingual Supports**

A major focus of language programs in many parts of the world is preparing students of limited proficiency in a second or foreign language to cope with school instruction in the new language (Genesee, 1994, Shapson, 1984, and Wood, 1995). According to Shapson (p. 6), these students are usually put into three different groups. Reception classes, which compose entirely of students who require intensive ESL training by a specialist teacher; Withdrawal classes where the students spend part of the time in his homeroom class and the remaining time in the ESL class; and total integration classes where the students spend all their time learning in the mainstream class.

In some schools, according to Richards (1994), students may receive intensive language support before being mainstreamed or they may enter classes that parallel regular classes in subjects such as science or social studies but are specially designed for students with limited proficiency in the school language.

The first group students when in their mainstream classes, are expected to progress in school work at the same rate as other children of their age, despite not having a full command of the linguistic medium through which school subjects are being taught. Therefore, the promoting of SUMES service from an educational view could be based on the following assumption: 'in order to succeed in the regular school system, the student needs further instruction of the second language' (Richards 1990 p.145). Furthermore, Cummins (1981, p.4) characterizes this approach in these terms: "Lack of English proficiency is the major reason for language minority students' academic failure". Proficiency, here, could mean "the ability to use language for both basic communicative tasks and academic purposes" ( Law 1995).

There are, of course, some-reasons why most of the minority students' English is not sufficient or even worse. Students are used to speaking their first language at home and in their community (Keon, 1994). At school, they should use almost exclusively verbal language interaction in English, presumably to give knowledge of objects and to transmit information. These two different atmospheres will cause students to be confused and frustrated. Dabene (1993) and Genesee (1994) argue that it is very important for the educational institution to ensure a harmonious transition from the family context to that of school by trying to reduce the gap separating the two linguistic worlds. This transition for many children represents a real acculturation. Furthermore, Dabene (p. 80) stated:

**"It seems essential to me that when a child enters school, the use of his integral communication repertoire is to be permitted for a more or less drawn-out period, especially if this repertoire is linguistically heterogeneous and full of non-verbal elements".**

Because of this, SUMES initiated its service to help students settle their problems with the role of bilingual support or instructor. To be developmentally meaningful, the instruction must be individualized to take account of important differences among the learners helped. During this period of time, the students receive information through translation or explanation given by the instructor. This approach will give an opportunity for the students not only to improve their native literacy skills but also to get a clear picture of the learning process. Cummins (1981) and Shapson (1984) mention the multiple advantage of using the first language during these initial years as it enables the individual to grow better and faster into fuller literacy through other language, and also serves to protect and promote minority language". Furthermore, Fishman (1984) says:

**"it would seem to be best to rely on a learner's strongest language as the medium of instruction in whatever subject areas until the weaker language is fully strong enough to carry additional freight"(p. 64).**

### **3. Methodology**

This study used a single-case study design to find out the effectiveness of the bilingual support worker role provided for the minority children. As is suggested by Adelman et al. (1976), a case study is selected and studied in its own right, and it will be a 'bounded system' or 'single instance', such as an individual teacher (in Nunan, 1992). This may be called as a neo-ethnography approach which is the in-depth investigation of a single case by a participant observer, and also an evaluative, which is a single case studied at such depth as the evaluation of policy practice will allow.

#### **3.1. Subjects of study**

The subjects were those closely involved in the learning process, such as three teachers, minority language students (see table 1) and the instructor herself.



### *The Language Instructor*

Mrs. Hang Suk Kwon, a housewife, has been in Sheffield for about 7 months when this study was conducted. When she first came to Sheffield she took English classes at the Octagon centre (International Student Wives program) where she learned and improved her English. It was easy for her to adjust to the new environment for she used to be a teacher in her own country, Korea. Thus her profession helped her establish her own strategy and pace in coping with the learning style in this country. When she finally completed her course, she was able to help the SUMES program, particularly in helping her own people children who were struggling in coping not only with the new system of learning, but also with the language barrier at school.

She was first helping students in one school, but since more students came to study in Sheffield, she was also asked to help them with their learning. She was scheduled to be at school twice a week for each student. Besides working with the students at schools, she was also attending special English class at Mount Pleasant Community Centre where she learned more about classroom management, etc.

The study was primarily focused on the role of the bilingual instructor in SUMES project who was helping three Korean students in two different schools (or settings).

**Table 1:** The Allocation of Korean Bilingual Support

No	Schools	Levels	
		Nursery	Primary
1.	Waterthorpe	Na Yeong Lee	-
2.	Woodthorpe	Yasmin	Sandy

### **3.2. Data Collection Method:**

There were different kinds of data collected during the study, such as classroom activities that included teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, and instructor-student interaction. In order to get more data and information, the study employed some techniques, such as observations, tape-recording, questionnaires, and diary study. Interview and checklists were used during the observation, and with the writer being a participant in the class activities. The interview used both semi-structured and unstructured types (Appendix 3). This method was used to get more information from teacher, student, and instructor. It was also used to find out their opinions, feelings, impressions, values, and other things that could not ordinarily be seen and picked up in casual interaction. The interview was usually briefly carried out after the class session or during the break time, to collect feedback and reactions to the lesson, their own work and class work. The checklists, on the other hand, were

used to monitor specific skills, behavior, attitudes, and accomplishments of individuals such as; teacher, student, and instructor. They were mainly used in order to get a clear picture of classroom activities without attracting class attention, and also to get more information about the students' language function, and their socialization (see appendix 2).

For this study, responses were also collected by means of a relatively open-ended questionnaire. This questionnaire contained 15 questions which were administered to both the teachers and instructor. These questions were derived from 5 broad categories that the study intended to find out (table 2). One category was about 'student identification' and the other four were about 'bilingual support' roles (see appendix 1). In order to avoid misinterpretation and to get more reliable data, it was necessary to adapt a procedure of key word analysis for generating categories from the statements made by respondents.

**Table: 2** The Nature of Bilingual Support Role

No	Category	Question Number	Total
1.	Work closely with the class teacher	8 , 9, 10, 11	4
2.	Devise appropriate teaching materials	14 , 15,	2
3.	Translation/interpretation relevant curriculum	5 , 6, 7	3
4.	Home / school liaison	12 , 13,	2
5.	Student identification	1 , 2, 3, 4	4

The other method used was by analyzing the diary. This diary documented the attempts of an instructor, a native speaker of Korean, to learn English after first arriving in Sheffield, and later to work as a bilingual support. The study was interesting for two reasons; it had helped her much in understanding the students' situation and feelings about learning the language, and learning from her own experience, she could improvise in dealing with strategy as well as the pace of the student's learning (see appendix 5).

### 3.3. Data Analysis and Presentation

This study was a tiny part of an evaluation of a large-scale project, studying the role of bilingual support in the multilingual city classrooms. It took place in three classrooms from different levels, and involved weekly naturalistic observations both during the presence and the absence of the bilingual support instructor. I usually sat with the instructor and the supported student either in the mainstream or in the pull-out class. I rarely took notes during the observation because of being a participant observer. I was involved in talking and helping the students with their group and individual work, particularly the group which the supported student belonged to. This gave a great pleasure because the students would think that I was also a relative or instructor to Na Yeong and



Yasmin. They seemed very happy to have her in their group, and were always interested in talking about any topic the instructor and I discussed.

**Table 3:** The Checklist on Bilingual Support Worker

No	Topic	NaYong	Yasmin	Sandy	Total	(%)
1.	I	3	4	4	11	07.69
2.	II	6	8	11	25	17.48
3.	III	5	8	6	19	13.29
4.	IV	6	5	6	17	11.89
5.	V	8	8	8	24	16.78
6.	VI	8	7	7	22	15.38
7.	VII	8	9	8	25	17.48
	Total	44	49	50	143	100.00

The table shows that, in general, the total points of support worker on the class activities was good, particularly in Sandy's class (50) which is the highest, followed by Na Yong's (49) and then Yasmin's (44). Furthermore, topic I contributes the lowest (7.69%) of all, while the highest was contributed by both topic II and topic VII (17.48%).

Topic V (16.78) shares the same points (8) among the three students but for different stressing. Topic VI, for instance, seems to be likely important for the three students (15.38). It was interestingly showed that Sandy got less (6) points than NaYong (8). It was because she could manage to work in group herself, and didnot need to be accompanied in the play ground. Finally, topic IV contributes (11.89%) and was varied from one student to another. (see Appendix 2)

Checklist on Reading indicates that Na Yong showed more motivation in learning to read (55.93%) compared to Yasmin who could only reach 44.07% in reading. Sandy, however, did not participate in this type of learning. (see Appendix 4).

The other type of evaluation was the interview. It was usually conducted during the break time. Student's interview, for instance, should be carried out on the presence of the instructor - translating the questions and answers for the student. From the result, it was found that in both NaYong and Yasmin classes, the pictures or model used by teacher were of great help for them. Instruction, explanation and question which were given in English failed to attract their attention due to the lack of language they have. Therefore the role of instructor was very needed. Sandy, however, didnot need this help, for she was more independent, and usually tried hard to pay attention to what the teacher said.

However, the parents' role was very helpful on the three students' cases, partly because they had to review the lessons (e.g. colour, letters, numbers

or new vocabularies) and partly also for checking and helping them with their homework (e.g. on maths, English, history, etc).

One morning, the teacher explained about a cultural topic "Divali" and how people in India like to draw on their 'palm' with nice shapes and colour. The students were to draw their palm on their book and draw some smaller shapes in the middle of the palm and all over the fingers, and finally colour them. While everybody was busy, I approached Na Yeong. (O is Observer, N is Na Yeong, and S is Student)

O: "Nice drawing, can I see your drawing?"

N: "Yes" (show me the drawing)

O: "What is this" (pointing to the middle of the palm)

N: (Smiled and shook her head)

S: "I know what it is, it's a star" (her friend answered it for her)

O: "Well, what is it again Na Yeong?"

N: "A star" (and she repeated it again to herself)

O: "What colour do you like for this?"

N: "Red.... yellow....green" (took the three colours and showed them)

On the other day in Yasmin's class, the teacher was talking about Calendars and Dates which was the sub topic of the previous one, 'Christmas Day'.

(T: Teacher, J: Jasmin, and S: Student)

T: "What number comes after number four. Kate, .... number....?"

S1: (silent)..."five".

T: "Five... good girl. Come on then, you are sleepy, can you come here and find number

five Jasmin?"

J: ( came up to the teacher and pointed to no 5)

T: "That's right. Thank you. And add it number five. Well done, good girl."

"What comes after number five, Eddy?"

From the illustrations above, it may be seen that both Na Yeong and Jasmin were involved in the classroom activities without any help from the instructor. They could manage to understand the situation in different ways. Na Yeong, for instance, tried to work based on her understanding and interest, drawing any shapes she liked even though the teacher had already modelled on the board. By doing so, she could keep herself busy. Jasmin, on the other hand, who could not understand much about the explanation tended to be passive, but gave her response to the teacher correctly. It seemed that Jasmin did not actually understand the long sentences the teacher used, however, the teacher's gesture and the phrase 'number five' had helped her to give a proper response.

As the writer entered the class, one morning, the students were already working on their maths exercise. The writer sat down at Sandy's table to join her but then realized that she had not worked much about it, and asked her "Do you understand how to do it?" Shyly she replied, "No". The instruction was then explained by giving her an example ( and I believed that it was the example she understood). Then the writer asked her again, "Can you do the same to number

two?" "Yes, I can", and after a moment she asked, "Is it right?". Basically, she did not find it difficult, yet she had to be sure before working on it. The instructor was very confident about Sandy's academic ability, particularly in mathematics. In this subject, according to both teacher and instructor, she had outscored the other peer students. Moreover, if she was asked about other subject in Korean, she would respond accordingly. This was reasonable for she was always interested in any subject, and was motivated by her parents who are now both studying in Sheffield. Therefore, some assignment from teacher or instructor would do good for the minority students (see also Cummins, 1991). From this illustration, it was obvious that one or two key words are very helpful, yet the long instruction worked only for other majority students.

Learning the language in a formal way is good. However, children sometimes find it encouraging to know and use informal language. Jasmin, for instance, would use language that had never been taught before in the classroom. She picked them up when she was with her peers. She would suddenly say, "oh, my poor girl", or another time she would shout to her friend, "hey, you". When she played dolls with two other girls, this dialogue occurred, (J: Jasmin, S: Student/s)

S1 : "Jasmin, put the baby in!" ( she points to the doll in J's hands)

J : (she kept pulling the doll's hair and paid no attention to her peers)

S2 : "The baby's sleepy, now put it here". (rocking the cradle up and down)

S3 : (staring at Jasmin and then ready to take the doll from her hand) "Give me".

J : (feels very angry, ...breaks the doll into two pieces, and screamed ..)  
"No...".

Here, we witnessed another way how the students expressed their feelings and chose the language. In relation to this, the teacher once expressed her surprise, "I think she learns and knows more than she is letting on. I sometimes hear her using English in the playground, and it's something funny".

The most important question, however, was the extent to how the bilingual support instructor worked. From the data gathered, it was found out that the instructor had carried out her role in a dedicated manner. Based on several observations, it was obvious that she always tried hard to do her best to help both teacher and student to get through the instructional activities either in main stream, or pull-out classes.

Judging from the data collected using checklists, it was discovered that for the value of classroom activities as a whole (the first 3 topics) the score was less compared with those of face-to-face interaction. This means that the role of the instructor was significantly focused on the language support and motivational support, which was indeed the main idea of this project, particularly in the lower levels. Sandy, on the other hand, not only needed support with her language problem, but also with academic and social matters. It was interesting to see how this instructor tried to put herself on a different role accordingly.



The response to the questionnaires were unsurprisingly relevant to the other finding. All teachers agreed that their students needed support and will still do for the following terms in a proportional need. Both Jasmin's and Na Yeong's teachers suggested that it would be a great help for them to have the instructor more often in class, and help the teacher to work with other groups.

From the interview, some interesting information was gathered, such as

O : "How do you mention about the improvement of the children you help?"

BS : "They improve a lot, especially, with their self confidence".

O : "Self confidence, why do you put this term in your aims"? As far as your role is concerned,...to my understanding, ...you are here to help them with their English and learning process, am I right?.

BS : "Yes, I'm supposed to help them to understand the teacher, the friends, and the lesson. But, you know, they cannot speak English. Even Jasmin and Na Yeong... never heard the language before coming here, not at all. So, it's very difficult for them to do anything. I remember when NaYeong came to school for the first time. She came with her parents, but they don't know English. They were very ashamed, and could not explain to the teacher what they felt at that time. They were really, really hopeless".

O : "That's why you put confidence as the first priority?"

BS : "Yeah, and also the feeling of comfort". It's very important to build their sense of confidence. They don't feel that you are like a stranger, and I teach them some very basic words in English, such as, 'toilet please, 'please help', 'Sorry', etc.

O : "But... it's not enough, is it? Because, they should live in the community and make contact with other people, they need the language badly".

BS : "I think there is a difference between the purpose of their learning and other minority students'. For Korean students, they don't need to speak fluent English. However, they stay here only for a short time. The parents don't intend their children to master the language".

O : " I believe, they understand more now, even though they seem very quiet".

BS : " Yes, they do. And I think after 5 or 7 more months, they will start speaking the language better".

### Conclusion

Perhaps the most important point to be made in the discussion of the effectiveness of the role of bilingual support is whether or not she could fulfil her role well, according to the underlined-purposes of the program.

The study shows the role of instructor was significantly focused on the language support and motivational support. However, the instructor seemed to be likely to be more aware of the curriculum/syllabus and lesson plan, and to closely work together in understanding and planning the suitable materials and strategy

for the students supported in order for her to be able to get along with class activities easily.

Furthermore, in terms of opinion and comment of teachers, it can be seen that this program was very helpful, not only in coping with the students, in particular, but also in establishing an understandable and warm atmosphere in the learning process.

She was just one of the SUMES staffs who shared her good feeling and satisfaction working with students and teachers at school, and was like Mrs. Ibtosom Hussain, the other support worker from Netherthorpe nursery school who was working with 3 Yemani children, she was happy and enjoyed her work, yet she could not deny the fact that students usually lost their language after coming back from their country during the long holiday. Indeed, this bilingual support worker had done her work effectively.

#### Checklist on Reading

Student's name :

	Points to be Observed	Date	
1.	listens to story but is not looking at pages		
2.	watches pictures as story is read aloud		
3.	makes up words for picture		
4.	pretends to read		
5.	recognizes some words from a dictated story		
6.	participates in reading by supplying rhyming words		
7.	memorizes text and pretends to read story		
8.	looks at words when reading / is being read		
9.	recognizes words in a new context		
10.	reads word-for-word		
11.	reads familiar stories fluently		
12.	uses context clues, phonic analysis to read words		
13.	chooses to read independently		
14.	reads fluently		

Coding : 1: not yet, 2: emerging, 3: yes

\* Modified from "Checklist for Assessing Emerging Readers"  
(Law and Eckes, 1995)

Checklist on Bilingual Support Worker

No	Topics to be Observed	Date of Observation			
	working closely with teacher				
1.	discuss the topic				
2.	know the objective				
	promoting the use of English				
3.	use simple English to check student's understanding				
4.	ask student in English				
5.	encourage student to ask in English				
6.	help student to summarize/retell in simple English				
	interaction with students				
7.	get involved in group work through simple English				
8.	encourage student to interact (non) /verbally with peer				
9.	participate in the playground				
	devising teaching materials				
10.	prepare supplement material to enrich topic discussed				
11.	has book and handouts for one-to-one discussion				
	using first language /interpret				
12.	translate teacher's explanation				
13.	ask student in L1 and translate the answer into English				
14.	help student understand / answer teacher's question				
	collaboration between teacher-parent-instructor				
15.	send student's record to parent				
16.	discuss the assignment with teacher/send to parents				
17.	discuss student's improvement/weakness with parents				
	motivation and dedication				
18.	arrive on time				
19.	enjoy the work				
20.	demonstrate willingness and creativity				



**1. STUDENT :**

NO	TOPIC	POSSIBLE QUESTION
1	Topic	What did you learn today ?
2	Student's knowledge	Did you like /understand it ?
3	Language support role	Were you happy because .....?
4	Teacher's role	What did the teacher ask you to do ?
5	Parent's role	Are you going to learn more at home ?

**2. BILINGUAL SUPPORT :**

NO	TOPIC	POSSIBLE QUESTION
1	Topic	What is it about ?
2	Student's knowledge	Did she know it before ?
3	Language support role	What did you do in the class .....?
4	Teacher's role	Did the teacher make herself clear ?
5	Parent's role	How could her parents help her ?

**3. TEACHER :**

NO	TOPIC	POSSIBLE QUESTION
1	Topic	What's your topic today ?
2	Student's knowledge	Do you think she understands it ?
3	Language support role	Did she help much ?
4	Teacher's role	How do you make sure that she learns ?
5	Parent's role	Do parents need to work on the topic ?

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## **READING IN CONTENT AREAS: Are You Ready?**

By: Tumpal H. Dongoran

### **Introduction**

When students read materials in content areas such as biology, history, and vocational arts, they encounter distinctive viewpoints and explanations of the world. Biology describes the life processes of living organisms; history records and interprets past events; and vocational explore and provide training for careers in specific trades. In explaining these different aspects of the world, content materials may contain unfamiliar concepts, strange terms, and particular styles of writing. As a result, students frequently require guidance as they attempt to learn and act upon new information. Content area teachers have an important role in providing such guidance.

Herber (1978) says that activities that guide the students as they read enable them to understand and to acquire information that otherwise would be inaccessible. Providing guidance is the opposite of simply handing out a passage and telling students to read it and prepare themselves for some kind of future exam. Instead, it means providing activities before, during, and after reading assignments in order to help students understand and retain what they read.

Activities that occur before students read content materials are essential because they prepare students for the target passage (Cansler, 1954). The role of such activities have been recognized in the professional literature since at least the turn of this century. In the preparation stage of a reading lesson, Mulliner (1898) says that the object is to give the thoughts of the students a definite tendency, to arouse expectation, stimulate interest, and give intellectual activity from the beginning. Following this explanation, Mulliner provides a sample lesson with a distinct prereading stage.

At one time, educators used the term reading-readiness to refer exclusively to the step of introducing preschool and primary grade children to print. However, the limitations of this view of readiness became apparent in the 1940s (Gray,1942). Since then, reading readiness has come to mean one's preparedness for any reading task. Students are ready to read and learn from a passage when they have acquired adequate prior knowledge, appropriate reading strategies, and control of that knowledge and those strategies to satisfy their reasons for reading.

The remainder of this article describes five characteristics of students that can be addressed directly in order to prepare them for immediate content area reading tasks. The description of these aspects are meant to specify what readers need in order to be prepared for a passage. In this activities, the writer tries to describe how teachers can design activities that provide readers with what they need. The five characteristics are: *Motivation, Content Knowledge, Word Knowledge, Learning Strategies, and Attention.*



### **Motivation**

Motivation is defined as that which arouses and sustains a person's behavior. Providing the motivation to read content materials is a primary task of content area teachers. Ideally, all students are highly motivated, eager readers who have the urge to master whatever information is presented. Realistically, many students are apathetic, frustrated readers who view reading assignments as something to avoid. As a result, before guiding these students through content materials, we need to convince them to begin the journey. Students who won't read are as disadvantaged as students who can't read.

Studies of engaged time on task reemphasize the importance of motivation (Gase, 1978). These studies relate students' achievements with time spent actively engaged with instructional activities. In essence, the findings from these studies corroborate the sensible notion that increased achievement results when students persist at their tasks. The challenge, of course, is to provide positive instructional settings which motivate students toward such persistence.

Motivating students in a positive manner relies largely on capitalizing on their curiosity (Gibson and Levin, 1975). Young children, adolescents, and adults want to explore their environments. When presented with a new stimulus, they want to know what it is. This natural phenomenon drives them to seek information about people, places, things, and events. Deep down, people like to make sense out of what often appears to be an uncertain, chaotic world. Directing students' basic curiosity to the topics and explanations of the world around them is crucial for motivating students to read. Educators must provide materials at appropriate reading levels so students can read to satisfy their curiosity. In addition, teachers should maintain disciplined classroom organization that is conducive to silent reading.

### **Content Knowledge**

Assuming that students are motivated to read certain materials, their ability to learn new information depends on how familiar they are with its content. To illustrate this point, let us consider the following paragraph.

#### **Openness versus Closeness**

A closed model is not amenable to representing any other kind of operations than those it already encompasses (e.g., "autonomous syntax" in linguistic theory). An open model can be expanded as new insights accrue, without requiring a fundamentally new design (e.g., models based on general cybernetics). The implication often is that open models are to be construed as merely representative of understanding operations, rather than as exhaustive statements. Here, the design of the models themselves is often more revealing than the claims of the researchers involved (De Beaugrande, 1981:266-267).

**Do you think the students understand the above paragraph?**

Even though they were probably motivated enough to pronounce each word and read the sentences fluently, we suspect that they may have difficulty explaining the paragraph to someone else. This difficulty could be due to limited prior knowledge about the subject matter discussed. The two examples (autonomous syntax and models based on general cybernetics) were meant to illustrate the key points of the passage. But students need to understand those examples in order to grasp the concepts which they illustrate. In other words, they need the students we teach need to have adequate prior knowledge of the content of a passage in order to understand it.

The difficulty of ideas depends largely on their concrete-ness and on readers' previous experiences with them. For example, the concept presented by dog is already known by most students. Students have had numerous direct, concrete experiences with those animals, so they have a firm grasp of the concept of dog. However, students can have difficulty with abstract and infrequently experienced concepts. For instance, the concept represented by mil is unfamiliar to most student. Students do not have the opportunity nor the need to measure the diameter of wire, so they have not encountered a unit of length that is equal to .001 of an inch. Moreover, units of measure are difficult concepts for students to grasp initially because of their abstract nature. Even though dog and mil are easy words to pronounce, the concepts they represent are quite different. Considerable prereading attention would be necessary to develop student understanding of mil if the concept were important for understanding a passage. Therefore, students need to be familiar with the content of a passage, and their knowledge needs to be activated. Students should recognize that they know something about a topic.

**Word Knowledge**

Identifying the printed words in content area passages is an obvious reading task. In order to deal with the concepts represented by a passage, students need to know the words. You can't deal with the concept represented by #@&+ because you are unable to identify what that configuration of symbols represents. Understanding the concept is one thing; identifying the printed word or words that represent that concept is another.

It is important to realize that even though word identification is necessary for reading content materials, it does not guarantee understanding. As we pointed out in the preceding section, there more to reading than being able to identify each word on a page. However, content area materials do include unfamiliar words that present identification difficulties and need to be taught to students.

While planning content lessons, a distinction can be made between the conceptual difficulty of words and their identification difficulty. The latter concern involves helping students independently "figure out" which concepts are represented by words. To return to an earlier example, the conceptual difficulty of dog and mil varies drastically, but the spelling pattern is nearly identical. Both

three-letter words are comprised of a vowel in the middle and single consonants on either end. However, warfare and buoyancy represent a different situation. These terms represent concepts that are essentially equal in difficulty, but their ease of identification may vary considerably. That is, students could understand the concepts represented by warfare and buoyancy with about equal effort, but their irregular spelling pattern of buoyancy may cause some difficulty with initial identification. Because of this, we would need to spend time during the readiness stage of an assignment explaining the structure and contextual setting of the term. Buoyancy could be located in the reading passage and its meaning inferred from the way it is used. Other form of the word such as buoy and buoyant could be presented. The three syllables in buoyancy might be underlined. Finally, the word could be lettered on a card and in our classroom for daily review.

Different features of words deserve attention as you introduce them to your students. The fundamental features, of course, are the concepts words represent. If the meaning of the word is not understood, then knowing its other characteristics is useless. At all times, devote attention to the meaning of words when their characteristics are pointed out. Other features of words found in the text that deserve attention include contextual setting, spelling pattern, and morphemic composition.

#### **Contextual Setting**

Whenever possible, point out the contextual setting of important words, the way they are used in a passage. However, be certain that a contextual setting provides sufficient information about a term before directing students to attend to that information. Consider the following three sentences:

1. His felodese totally shocked some people and merely surprised others.
2. Some people resort to felodese to escape from their problems.
3. Felodese, or suicide, is the ultimate form of deliberate self-destruction.

As you can see, all three sentences contain the same uncommon term (felodese) and the same number of words. However, sentence three provides many more direct, explicit cues to the meaning of that uncommon term than do sentences one or two. Clearly, it is important to determine whether sufficient meaning cues are available in a passage before directing students to "use context" to identify unknown words.

#### **Spelling Patterns**

Spelling patterns can be regular in that they contain predictable letter-sound correspondences, or they can be irregular by containing unpredictable letter-sound correspondences. The words below are examples of regular and irregular spelling patterns.



**Regular Spelling Pattern**

esker  
endorse  
concave  
larva  
acute  
pulsar  
thorax  
boycott

**Irregular Spelling Pattern**

facade  
naive  
alkali  
paranoia  
schism  
chameleon  
phlegm  
ricochet

Although you need to spend no more than a few minutes of any lesson with the spelling patterns of words, it is helpful to alert students to terms containing irregular patterns in an effort to reduce confusion about pronunciation. Pointing out the regular spelling patterns of other terms helps students understand pronunciation is a limited goal, students must acquire the ability to identify the names of the concepts being studied. Once teachers and students share common labels for ideas, the business of developing those ideas can proceed efficiently.

**Morphemic Composition**

The morphemic composition of words consists of their meaningful parts. Derived words consisting of prefixes, roots, and suffixes, and compound words contain two or more meaningful parts. The morphemic composition of the following terms could be pointed out as a way to help students identify the words and infer their meanings. Here are some examples of derived words:

polyphonic  
triangular  
micrographics  
bacteriology  
gateway

invertebrate  
semitropical  
intergalactic  
personification  
craftsperson

**Learning Strategies**

Students may have appropriate levels of motivation, adequate prior content knowledge, and sufficient word knowledge; but they still may have difficulty learning new information from a passage. This difficulty may be due to the fact that they do not have appropriate learning strategies for the text. Strategies are plans that are employed to achieve certain goals. For instance, successful basketball coaches employ numerous strategies to win games. Sometimes they use a one-on-one defense and sometimes a zone defense. Player substitutions are made at strategic times, and the tempo of the game is varied by stalling or by running a fast break. Different strategies are applied according to the demands of the situation.

Learners also have available strategies (Anderson, 1978). Helping students apply the learning strategies which are most appropriate for certain portions of material

to be read is an important part of the readiness stage of content reading content assignments. In this article, the writer tries briefly describes three learning strategies. Of course, there are more than three strategies available to learners, but we have omitted possibilities such as visualizing and reviewing information and creating mnemonic devices in favor of three which can be directly addressed in the prereading stage.

#### **Anticipating Information**

Anticipating information involves predicting what information is coming in a passage. It calls for readers to think ahead while reading. Once readers have a set of expectations for a passage, they can settle in and see which expectations are met, which are not, and what new, unexpected information is encountered.

Helping students anticipate information can be accomplished by telling them what to look for. If a passage is mainly about a topic such as the Oklahoma Land Run, the effects of yeast on bread dough, or the safety features of an arc welder, you can provide an overview and stimulate thinking through questions or statements about each passage, giving the class an advance idea of its contents. Furthermore, students may be stimulated to inspect the passage on their own so that they form independent expectations. Whatever the case, attention should be given to helping students anticipate information while they are being guided through content area materials.

#### **Elaborating Information**

Perhaps the best way to learn new information is to elaborate it when it is first encountered. Elaboration involves thinking deeply about a topic and developing and expanding it. This process occurs when new information is embellished by connecting it with what one already knows. In social studies, for example, students might read the following passage:

The biggest differences that developed among the American Indians were of where they settled to live. There were five main living centers where these people settled: the Northwest Coast, the California region, the South West, the Eastern Woodlands, and the Plains.

While reading, your students might elaborate the above information by thinking of specific tribes that live in the five main centers. For example, they might think "I know about the Apache, Navajo, and Pueblo Indians in the Southwest. I know that their traditional way of life differs from the Sioux and Comanche Indians of the Plains." Additionally, remembering the general principle that environment influences the way of life of all living organisms helps explain why differences are found among American Indians. Through elaboration, students connect what they already know with new information they are learning. Thus, they more easily recall that new information later because they have a variety of ways to get to it.

### **Organizing Information**

The value of organizing information as an aid to learning has been recognized at least since Aristotle, and research has convincingly demonstrated that our long term memories consist of organized systems (McKoon, 1977). Because of this, arranging information according to meaningful classifications is an effective learning strategy. Outline and graphic organizers are as teaching procedures designed to develop students' abilities to organize what they read.

Following the organization of ideas in expository passages facilitates recall of those ideas (Meyer, Brandt, & Bluth, 1980). Readers who are sensitive to the organizational pattern of a passage typically learn more from that passage than students who are insensitive to the pattern. Because of this, helping students determine which passage follow a time order sequence and which ones relate causes and effects, problems and solutions, simple listings, and so on seems to be an appropriate prereading activity.

Helping students apply strategies appropriate for learning certain portion of material is an important part of the prereading, readiness stage of a lesson. To assure that students become proficient with a learning strategy, you should give them occasional, direct instruction.

### **Attention**

We each have only a limited capacity for taking in information and making sense of it. This limitation becomes readily apparent to you when two person talk to you at the same time. When such a situation occurs, you must internally turn off one message and attend only to the other. Otherwise, you become confused and miss both messages. In short, attention needs to be focused on specific information in order for it to be learned (Travers, 1977).

In order to learn from content materials, students must acquire varying levels of motivation, content knowledge, word knowledge, and learning strategies. In addition, students must have the ability to attend to material at both general and specific levels. The general level involves asking boisterous, distracted students to "Pay Attention". Getting students to pay general attention depends on factors such as motivation.

The specific level of attention involves selecting information in a text for study at the expense of other contiguous information. Because of limited capacities, readers need to select important bits of information in text and disregarded less important information. Otherwise, all words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs appear to have equal importance, and the barrage of information becomes overwhelming. Readers must face the problem of determining what merits attention.

Readers' purposes, or reasons for reading, determine which information deserves attention. Different purposes help focus attention on different aspects of a passage. For example, consider the "American Indians" passage presented earlier. Some students might read that passage to learn the major differences among American Indians, others might want to know the number of main living centers, and still others might want to learn the location of the five centers. In



fact, all three, or none, of these purposes might constitute a reason for reading. The point is that purposes for reading influence which aspects of a passage deserve attention.

There is still doubt that skilled readers vary their attention to ideas in print according to their reasons for reading (Fraser, 1977). However, helping readers focus their attention on pertinent information is a major task during content area instruction. Helping students learn how to independently clarify specific reasons for reading is important, also. These two concerns can be addressed during the prereading, readiness stage of content reading lessons.

### **Conclusion**

Through this article, the writer has described five characteristics of students to consider while planning content area reading assignments. Here, he stresses that these five characteristics can be combined and addressed during one prereading, readiness activity. For instance, an activity that develops students' content knowledge prior to reading can, at the same time, influence students' motivation to read. Specific learning strategies for certain portions of a passage can be elicited so that attention is directed to certain information within that passage. Increasing students' knowledge of a word features can and should go hand-in-hand with developing students' knowledge of the content represented by each word.

Consideration of each of the five aspects presented here will help you pinpoint activities that prepare specific groups of students for what they read.

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