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Summary: The Most Important Points for Parents

- If students are trilingual, keeping their first language strong is important.
- If there is no English spoken at home, find community activities that help immerse students in English outside of school.
- Being trilingual does not harm students English or French oral language proficiency. If they are exposed to some English outside of school, we found no negative effects on their language development at all.

Sites with Resources for Parents:

<http://www.frenchforlife.ca/parents.cfm>

<http://www.welcomehere.ca/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.ViewPage&pageId=1113>

<https://www.hdsb.ca/learning-and-resources/Pages/French/Resources-to-support-your-child-at-home-with-FSL-acquisition.aspx>

http://www.openculture.com/free_k-12_educational_resources

<https://cpf.ca/en/activities-resources/for-parents/resources-for-parents/>

<https://on.cpf.ca/resources/for-parents/>

<https://www.noslangues-ourlangues.gc.ca/en>

For more information on the Multilingualism and Literacy Lab, please visit:

<https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/chenlab/index.html>

If you have any questions or would like talk to someone in the lab, please feel free to email:

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The Power of Narratives

Written by Janani Selvachandran

Children become familiarized with narratives prior to entering school. They listen to stories told by their parents, and engage in their own, basic forms of storytelling. While storytelling is a fun shared activity for children to engage in, the ability to produce and comprehend stories also builds a strong foundation for literacy.

One area of narrative competence is story grammar, or the ability to structure a narrative using appropriate narrative elements. Commonly used story grammar elements include character, setting, initiating events and so forth. To successfully create a narrative, one must be able to structure these elements appropriately and in a logical order.

Story grammar has previously been found to contribute to oral and reading comprehension among monolingual children. Our research is revealing that story grammar plays a similar role in the development of comprehension skills within bilingual children. As such, we encourage parents and teachers to focus on building an early knowledge of story grammar among children, both within the home and at school.

Ways to foster structural knowledge includes having a conversation with children about the different structural elements of a story. Questions such as, “where did the boy find the frog?” can help children to identify the setting. Parents and teachers also can facilitate thinking about characters’ internal states by asking questions such as, “How did that make the girl feel?” A list of story grammar elements commonly found in narratives is included below for reference. (P3)

French Vocabulary: Do Home Factors Make a Difference?

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Are there differences between bilingual and trilingual students when it comes to their vocabulary knowledge in French?

Read more on P3



Please note: Anglophone = Bilingual (English/French); ELL = English Language Learner (English/French/Other Language)

Multilingual Learners in French Immersion: for Parents

Written by Diana Burchell

Toronto is a highly diverse city in which many households speak multiple languages. For this reason, students in this program are considered sequential bilingual (or trilingual) learners.

As a response to this multilingualism, we are attempting to understand the differences and similarities between bilingual (English-French) and trilingual (English-French-Other) students in French programs.

There are no differences when students are understanding or creating stories according to this study.

Oral Language Proficiency is a better foundation for reading development than solely vocabulary, especially in the early years of schooling.

Vocabulary instruction in second/third languages is influenced by many factors other than first language including the language input from parents.

In English and French Oral Language, Anglophone and ELL students are equal. There are no differences when they are understanding or creating stories according to this study.

In English Vocabulary, Anglophone students and ELL students with English as a first language are the same. However, ELL students with a first language other than English (speak English less than 50% of the time at home) were lower. We expect that they will catch up over time, but at a slower rate.

In French Vocabulary, all students are the same. There are no differences in the amount of French vocabulary that they understand.



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The Power of Narratives-cont'd

Above all, the most important thing is to create many opportunities for children to engage in storytelling, whether it be shared book reading, telling new stories out loud, or re-telling stories that were heard before.

Story Grammar Element

- Character(s)
- Setting
- Initiating event
- Internal state/response
- Goal
- Internal plan
- Attempt
- Consequence
- Reaction

Possible Discussion Points

- Who was in the story
- Where did the story take place
- What happened first/What was the problem
- How did the character feel/react
- What did the character want to do to solve the problem
- What was the character's plan to achieve that goal
- How did the character try to put the plan in action
- What happened after the character tried doing X
- How did the story end/Was the problem fixed

Multilingual Learners in French Immersion: for Teachers & Principals



The increasing diversity of English Language Learners (ELLs) has prompted an increase in interest in the differences in bilingual vs. trilingual French Immersion students.

Vocabulary instruction in second/ third languages is influenced by many factors other than first language including parental income and the language input from parents.

Previous research shows that Anglophone students outperform ELL students on English vocabulary measures but are not significantly higher on other reading-related measures in English or in French.

With English Vocabulary, four demographic (home) variables were significant in predicting children's performance: Parental Education, Language Status, Children's Input from their Parents in English and the number of books in the home. For English Oral Language Proficiency, there were no significant predictions based on demographic factors.

How do we make things more equal so that students with different home factors have an equal chance of success? We've compiled a list of tips in general that can help you give all students the best chance in the classroom.



“Students are not influenced by demographic factors in French.”

1) Parental Education

We know that the level of parental education/income affects vocabulary learning. To equalize this, we recommend providing extra resources when possible (i.e. tutoring, books).

2) Language Status

Students who speak English less than 50% of the time understand less vocabulary since they've been exposed to it less. We recommend providing resources for families (i.e. free podcasts, shows, books, Youtube channels) that bolster their language input.

2) Children's Input from Parents

We recommend setting children up with other adults, like community members, to help with English exposure.

4) Number of English Books at Home

For this we recommend workshops for parents on how to access library resources and checking with students individually to see how more books could be provided for them at home.

French Vocabulary: Do Home Factors Make a Difference?

Written by Diana Burchell

Research says no!



We tested to see whether four home variables affected student's performance on French Vocabulary. These measures were parental education/income, child's first language, children's input from their parents in English as well as the number of English books in the home.

Results show that none of these variables affected French Vocabulary. This is mainly because they receive all of their instruction at school and the home environment only minimally affects their



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How does Oral Language Proficiency help students develop French Reading Comprehension?

Written by Michelle Huo

English Oral Proficiency is shown to predict how students perform on measures of French Reading Comprehension.

This tells us that there is transfer from a student's knowledge of English to their knowledge of French. This is true for bilingual and trilingual teachers.

Tips for Parents:

This study shows us that it is really important for students to have a strong grasp in their first language. Whether this is English or another language, they should be practicing this language regularly (i.e. reading, writing, telling stories, speaking). If your student has a different first language, we encourage them to find ways to speak English in the community (i.e. friends, after-school activities) if there is no English spoken at home.

Tips for Teachers:

Students can use one language to learn another. We recommend teaching students to compare and contrast languages, especially English and French. This can be done by comparing sentence structure, vocabulary, etc. We also recommend finding communities for students who speak other languages so that they can find these contrasts. For example, if you don't speak Spanish but have students in the school who do, put them together in a group and make them "language detectives" in charge of discovering the similarities and differences between French/English and other languages.



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