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ABSTRACT

Seven false but common assumptions about bilingual learners are examined, and whole language principles offering alternatives to those assumptions are presented. The seven assumptions include the following: (1) learning proceeds from part to whole; (2) classes should be teacher-centered; (3) lessons should serve students' future needs; (4) learning occurs as individuals practice skills and form habits; (5) learning oral language precedes learning to read and write; (6) bilingual learners have limited potential; and (7) learning should take place in English to facilitate assimilation. Particular emphasis is given to the last assumption, and ways of working with English-as-a-Second-Language learners using their native language are suggested. Both research and anecdotal evidence are offered in support of the alternative techniques. (MSE)

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# Whole Language: How Does it Support Second Language Learners?

David Freeman  
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## WHOLE LANGUAGE: HOW DOES IT SUPPORT SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS?

David Freeman  
Yvonne Freeman

### Abstract

This paper briefly reviews seven false assumptions often held about bilingual learners and gives whole principles that offer alternatives to those false assumptions. We then discuss in depth a seventh false assumption that directly deals with supporting the bilingual learner's first language: "Learning must take place in English to facilitate assimilation." By giving specific classroom examples, we suggest ways of working with English as a second language learners using their first language in the whole language classroom.

The seven false assumptions examined in this paper include: (1) learning proceeds from part to whole; (2) classes should be teacher-centered; (3) lessons should serve future needs of students; (4) learning takes place as individuals practice skills and form habits; (5) learning oral language proceeds learning to read and write; (6) bilingual learners have limited potential; (7) learning should take place in English to facilitate assimilation. It is concluded that when Whole Language teachers provide primary language support, their approach is the best one for bilingual learners.

After a presentation given at a recent Whole Language conference, we were surprised and concerned when bilingual teachers in the audience came up to us afterwards thanking us for being so supportive of primary language development for second language students. There was concern because it seemed obvious to us that whole language advocates would naturally support bilingual education. One goal of whole language is to teach the whole person, and that goal naturally includes drawing on and building on the strengths of the first language and culture of all students.

That experience promoted serious thinking about the message that some educators may be getting about whole language and its purpose, especially for language minority students. Because whole language teachers support second language students by providing comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985), teachers may believe that primary language support is not necessary if a teacher is using whole language. Support for the first language and culture of second language students is essential. Whole Language teachers can support the first language and culture of all their students even when the teachers have children from many different language backgrounds and do not themselves speak the first languages of their students.

This paper we will briefly review six common-sense assumptions often held about second language learners, and we will give the whole language principles that offer alternatives to those assumptions. Then it will discuss in depth a seventh assumption that directly deals with supporting the first language: "Learning must take place in English to facilitate the acquisition of English."

By giving specific classroom examples, the paper will suggest ways of working with English as a second language learners using their first language in the Whole Language classroom.

### **Second Language Learners: Common-sense Assumptions and Whole Language Principles**

The instruction that many second language learners have received in schools has been, for the most part, fragmented and disempowering (Crawford, 1989; Cummins, 1989; Flores, 1982). This instruction has often been based on a set of assumptions about bilingual students that serve to limit their potential as learners (Freeman & Freeman, 1989a; Freeman & Freeman, 1989b; Freeman & Freeman, 1989c). Below, there are seven assumptions that have hindered school success for language minority students. Each of these assumptions is contrasted with a Whole Language principle which expands the potential for educational success.

#### Assumptions about Bilingual Learners

##### Common-sense Assumptions

1. Learning proceeds from part to whole.
2. Lessons should be teacher centered because learning is the transfer of knowledge from the teacher to the student.
3. Lessons should prepare students to function in society after schooling.
4. Learning takes place as individuals practice skills and form habits
5. In a second language, oral language acquisition precedes the development of literacy.
6. The learning potential of bilingual students is limited.
7. Learning should take

##### Whole Language Principles

1. Learning proceeds from whole to part.
2. Lessons should be learner centered because learning is the active construction of knowledge by the student.
3. Lessons should have meaning and purpose for the student now.
4. Learning takes place as groups engage in meaningful social interaction.
5. In a second language oral and written language are acquired simultaneously.
6. Learning potential is expanded through faith in the learner.
7. Learning should take

place in English to facilitate the acquisition of English.

place in the first language to build concepts and facilitate the acquisition of English.

### Assumption #1: Learning Goes from Part to Whole

Traditionally, language teaching has been fragmented with lessons focusing on the teaching of isolated vocabulary words, the grammar rules, or the sounds of the target language. Although it may seem logical that the learning of a second language should proceed from these small parts to the whole, it is not psychological. Our brains are constantly trying to make sense of the parts we are given. We continually try to figure out what the whole is. When we are shown a part of a puzzle, for example, we immediately try to visualize the whole picture. Normally, we look at the picture on the cover of the box.

When second language learners are taught parts of a language out of the context of functional language use, they are often at a loss as they try to put the parts together. They have no big picture to look at. As a result, students may memorize irregular verbs for a test, but use them inappropriately in conversation because there is no connection between the test, with its emphasis on isolated parts, and a real conversation, which demands a focus on the whole communicative intent of language.

Second language learners have even more problems learning the parts when their experiential background is not the same as the teacher's or other students' backgrounds. Because of this, the whole, the way these parts fit together, is difficult for these students to figure out. An example of this comes from Pao, a Southeast Asian student from Vince's fourth grade classroom. Pao recently wrote "You somebody" in his journal when trying to describe a recent field trip. Fortunately, his teacher realized the student was trying to make sense of the name for the National Park they had visited, "Yosemite." Pao had heard the name and was trying to fit the name into English language words he already knew. Since Vince had shared Pao's experience, he was able to fit the parts of language Pao produced into a meaningful whole.

### Whole to part: inductive vs. deductive reasoning?

The question of whether to teach from part to whole or whole to part is not a new way to get at skills. Nor is it a revival of the old debate over inductive versus deductive teaching either. Whole language teachers often present students with specific examples and ask students to draw general conclusions. Whole language teachers involve students in both inductive and deductive reasoning. In addition, they encourage students to engage in abductive reasoning. In this kind of divergent thinking, students move away from established patterns and brainstorm new solutions to problems and see subjects in new ways. In whole language classrooms, teachers and students use all kinds of reasoning to explore questions that interest both the teacher and the students. However, the focus is always on the larger concept, and students are always aware of the big question they are trying to answer.

Assumption #2: Lessons should be Teacher-Centered

Vince was also successful with Pao because he centered on the learner. Since English as a second language learners do not know English and the teacher does, there is often a temptation to have a teacher-centered rather than a learner-centered classroom. It is important to remind ourselves as educators that language-minority students know a lot, they just do not speak English. In Crossing the Schoolhouse Border (Olsen, 1988), a report on California immigrant students, this was clearly explained in an interview with one eleventh grade Mexican student who felt misplaced when the school put him in Basic Math:

For me, they shouldn't have put me in Basic Math. I should have been in Algebra. But there is more English vocabulary in Algebra so they said I couldn't take it until I learned more English. I felt I was spending time with things I already knew, but then that's required of Latin immigrants. We waste our time because we don't know English yet. ( p. 50)

Second language learners have many stories to tell and will do so eagerly when given the opportunity to talk about their experiences. Many people working with language-minority students have listened to them and encouraged them to talk. Telling their stories has empowered these students and informed us as educators. Another quote from Crossing the Schoolhouse Border given by a tenth grade Mexican immigrant shows us how learner-centered classrooms can make a difference:

My ESL Teacher helped me a lot in my first year here. I could relax there. I wasn't afraid. She told me not to be afraid to talk and she helped me. In my other classes I was always confused and lost and I didn't want to ask anything because of my bad English ... (p.62).

In many whole language classrooms, immigrant students write their personal histories and, in this way, are able to show their background knowledge, their creativity and learn English at the same time. A poem in a book published by ESL students, written by Ger Vang, a Hmong middle school student, provides us with background, demonstrates his creativity, and shows his increasing command of English:

My Life

My house in  
Thailand was  
a little dirty but  
not so much. When we  
lived in Thailand  
I was little. I didn't know anything.  
I just played and  
jumped the rope.

When I came to the  
 United States  
 I had to  
 study  
 very  
 hard.

When  
 I  
 get  
 home. I  
 study  
 help  
 eat  
 clean  
 watch  
 work  
 Then

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### Assumption #3: Lessons Should Focus on the Future

All too often, the curriculum is centered on the future. Students are told to learn because "someday you are going to need to know what is being taught today." Kindergarten content is taught so children will be "ready" for first grade, first grade prepares children for second, and this future orientation continues all the way through high school or even college where students are prepared to function in society in the future. A goal of whole language teachers is to give students a function and purpose for what they are doing now. These teachers have found that unless students see a present purpose in what they are learning, they usually will not learn it.

Jane, a resource teacher who works with Hispanic students, has found a way to make writing meaningful and purposeful for students. Instead of using writing as a form of punishment, she has students write to avoid being punished. In this writing sample, Miguel shows his ability to use logical argumentation as he writes to convince Jane that he should have his ball back.

Why do I deserve my ball

I deserve to have my ball becous it cost alot of money. And my dad will get mad at me for loesing it. And my mom will get mad at me becous she will say that she waisted all of her money to some man for a teacher could take it away. All I want is my ball. I was playing with it when the bell rang because when I got to school evrybody had the courts and I was board so when the bell rang I started to have some fun. Becous I didn't have fun befor the bell rang. Please may I have my ball back? Thank you. Miguel

While Miguel's writing contains errors in spelling and grammar, his message can be understood, and because he is engaged in writing, he is moving toward control of conventional forms. The writing he does here serves an immediate need for Miguel.

Francis, an adult education ESL teacher, shared an example of student work with us that shows how powerful writing can be for second language learners when there is a function and an immediate purpose for the writing. One of her students, a Lao mother, produced a two-page essay because she wanted her children to remember that life was not always as good as they have it now.

Although the letter contains non-conventional grammar and spelling, the message is clear and the mother's voice comes through strongly as she tells of life before the arrival of the Vietnamese Communists and the contrast after: "After that in 1975 Vietnamie Communist belong to the Laos They wer kill orther people...who do not belong with their side..." She tells of her fear, "if they want to killer someone they came to the house at night time they took the peple to the Jungle and kill, it make me scare in my life..." She describes the hardships, "... When i swim the Mekong river I was afriad of many thing snakes, crocodiles leech the communitist and water when I were in the camp I did not have clothes or blanket ..." She ends her story with, "... in my new life I have a new land to stay and freedom." This mot'er had a function and an immediate purpose for using her new language.

Students often have difficulty studying for things they will need in the future. They learn best when they understand how assignments serve their present needs.

#### Assumption #4: Learning Takes Place as Students Work Alone to Form Habits

Because it is assumed that second language learners do not speak English correctly and might teach each other poor habits if they interact in English, they are sometimes isolated to work alone except when the teacher is controlling the language use while working with the whole class. Researchers (Long & Porter, 1985; Kagan, 1986) have shown, however, that group work facilitates language learning. Not only does group work give second language learners more opportunities to use language, but it also improves the quality of the language used and motivates to use language in meaningful ways.

In whole language classrooms, students work together on projects to explore topics of interest to them. They investigate questions by reading together and talking together, and then they write up their findings and sometimes also present their findings orally to others. In Charlene's fourth grade classroom, children with different language backgrounds prepared a unit on oceanography to present to other classes in the school. Groups of children became experts on sea animals of their choice. They read about the animals, visited an ocean aquarium, wrote about their sea animals for a class book, made models of the animals to scale, decorated their classroom like an ocean, and then presented their knowledge to other classes and to parents who came to visit their student-created ocean aquarium on display.

Charlene's students developed a great deal of written and oral language as they worked together on this project. They conducted their research, did their



writing, and made their presentations in small groups. As they worked together, both their language ability and their understanding of academic content increased much more rapidly than if they had carried out more typical individual research projects.

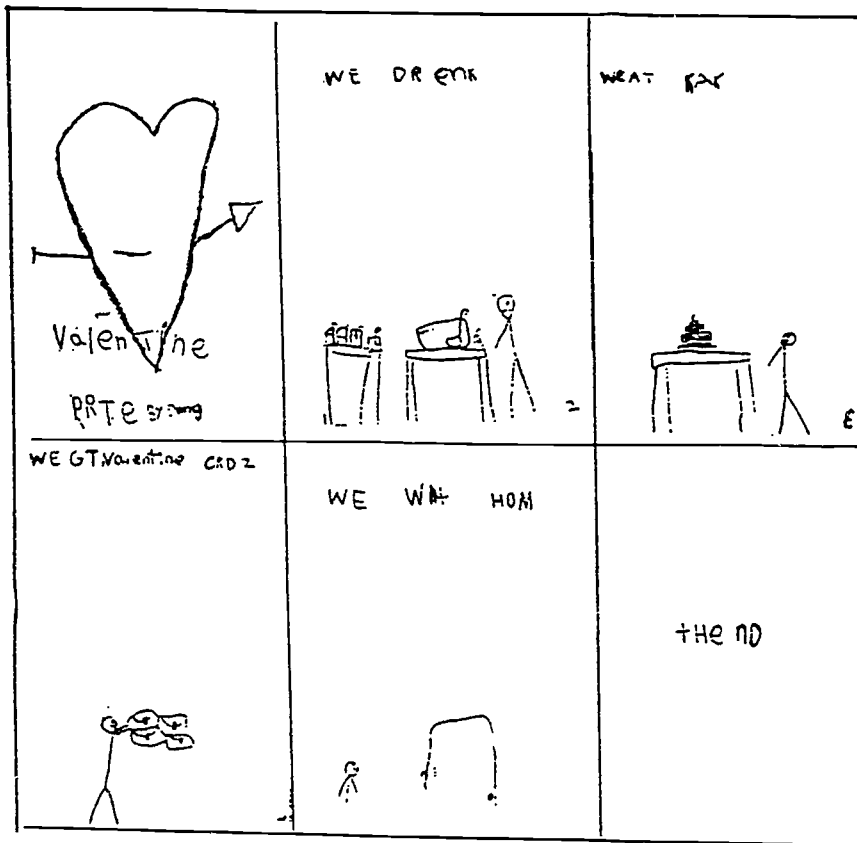


Figure 1: Illustrations and story written by Dang about Valentine's Day experience.

**Assumption #5: Language Develops through the Sequence of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing**

Traditionally, language teaching has moved from listening to speaking, from speaking to reading, and from reading to writing. The assumption has been that oral language acquisition precedes the development of literacy especially for second language learners. However, researchers looking at the development of literacy in second language children have shown that students benefit from being exposed to all four modes, listening, speaking, reading and writing, from the beginning. Many second language learners read and write before they speak or

understand oral language (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1979; Hudelson, 1984, 1986; Urzúa, 1986; 1989; Rigg, 1986; Edelsky, 1986).

In Katie's pre-first classroom, students discuss ideas and activities, read together, and write stories. They also write in their interactive journals daily. Children for whom English is a second language read and write from the start in Katie's classroom. This is demonstrated clearly by a story written by Dang Vue, a Hmong child. The children had talked and read about Valentine's Day. They made valentines and exchanged them and had their party. The next day, Dang choose to write and illustrate a story about the experience.

This example from Dang shows the value of introducing reading and writing from the beginning. There is no need to insist on perfect pronunciation before allowing a student to read or write. In fact, if students fail to develop literacy skills fairly rapidly, they will not be able to succeed at the academic tasks required of them.

#### Assumption #6: Limited English Proficient Students are also Limited in Other Ways

There is a tendency to underestimate the potential of second language learners because they do not speak English or because their background is different from the mainstream. Sometimes teachers or administrators view students who speak English as a second language as all the same, as a kind of "problem" that must be solved. After reading about second language learners and bilingual education and the importance in believing in their potential (Cummins, 1989; Krashen, 1985; Freeman & Freeman, 1989a), a teacher and graduate student who works with language-minority students recently reported on experiences she has had:

It has disturbed me greatly to sit in teachers' lounges and be approached by other teachers with the proposition that I take some of their "below grade level" Hispanic students for reading because they "just didn't know how to motivate them."... I have actually seen teachers look at their class lists, count the language minority surnames and begin to formulate the high, middle, and low reading groups!

While some teachers don't believe that bilingual learners can succeed, many are discovering daily that when teachers have faith in their students, those students can exceed expectations. Tammy, a student teacher, relates this story about having faith in the learner:

Roberto was a troublemaker. He not only never did his work, he kept others from doing theirs. He was disrespectful to me and I found it hard to like him. After our readings and discussions in class about having faith in the learner, I decided to try to be positive with Roberto. I smiled at him. I went to his desk and helped him with an assignment. One afternoon of positive response and he blossomed like a wilting plant that

has been watered! I could not believe what a difference my positive encouragement had made.

When educators believe in learners, they make it possible for students to believe in themselves and succeed.

Assumption #7: Learning should Take Place in English to Facilitate the Acquisition of English

Opponents of bilingual education argue that students should be taught in English to become fluent in English and compete in our society. The controversy surrounding the benefits of bilingual education has continually confused not only the public but also educators. Since 1968 when the Bilingual Education Act was added as an amendment to the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, there has been misunderstanding about the purpose and effectiveness of bilingual education for language minority students. Bilingual education has been attacked by former President Reagan (Crawford, 1989) and former Secretary of Education, Bennett (1985) in the past and continues to be attacked in the present by U.S. English advocates (Imhoff, 1990).

Whole Language proponents believe that one of the best ways to show faith in second language learners is to support the development of their first language. When teachers support students' first language, they build on their strengths and validate them as individuals. They teach the whole child. Using a student's first language in school is important for several reasons: 1) Students build important background knowledge and concepts in their first language, and this helps them succeed academically later; 2) language-minority students come to value their own language and culture; and 3) second language students maintain important family ties and become valuable, bilingual members of the larger community.

Cummins (1989), Krashen & Biber (1988), and Collier (1989) have all shown that bilingual education leads to academic success. There is considerable research to support that students who speak, read and write their first language well, succeed academically in English. The common sense assumption that "more English equals more English" does not hold true. Frank Smith (1985) argues that we cannot learn what we do not understand. English is more comprehensible to language minority students when they are provided with background information about the content in their first language (Krashen, 1985). When concepts are taught in the first language, second language learners are able to quickly grasp those ideas and the language associated with those ideas in English (Cummins, 1989; Krashen, 1985).

Bilingual teachers can support English as a second language students by providing content instruction for them in their first language and allowing them to respond in their first language to the concepts they are developing. Kay, a bilingual kindergarten teacher, taught a lesson to her students that supported their first language and led to the acquisition English. First, Kay read two different versions of Goldilocks in Spanish: Los Tres Osos y Bucles de Oro and Los Tres Osos y Ricitos de Oro. Kay and the students then developed a chart comparing the two stories. The kindergarten children showed a good understanding of how the stories were the same yet different. The charting done with the teacher as the scribe is shown below:

DiferenteLos Tres Oso y Ricitos de Oro

Ricitos se perdió en el bosque  
 Un conejo le ayudó  
 Los osos tenían chocolate  
 No había una silla que se quebró  
 Ricitos tiene pelo chino.  
 Los dibujos eran hechos con lápiz.  
 Todos se ponen amigos.  
 Ricitos, en el fin, piensa que ve a los  
 tres osos diciendo "adios".

## Translation in English

## Different

Goldilocks got lost in the woods.

A bunny helped her.  
 The bears had hot chocolate.  
 There was not a chair that broke.  
 The drawings are done in pencil.  
 Goldilocks has short, curly hair.  
 Everyone ended up friends.  
 Goldilocks thinks she sees the bears  
 saying "Goodbye" at the end.

El mismo

Ambos tienen Ricitos de Oro.  
 Ambos tiene tres osos.  
 Están en el bosque.  
 Hay camas.

DiferenteLos Tres Osos y Bueles de Oro

Ricitos estaba paseandose en el bosque  
 Estaba traviesa.  
 Comían sopa.  
 La silla pequeña se quebró.  
 Ricitos tiene pelo largo.  
 Los dibujos eran hechos de pintura.  
 Ricitos se fue corriendo.

## Different

Goldilocks was taking a walk in the  
 woods.

She was naughty.  
 They ate soup.  
 The small chair broke.  
 The pictures are painted.  
 Goldilocks has long hair.  
 Goldilocks left running.

The same

Both have Goldilocks.  
 Both have three bears.  
 They were in the woods.  
 There are beds.

After doing this exercise in Spanish with her students, Kay had the children draw their favorite part of the story. The children shared their pictures and described the pictures in English as Kay wrote their descriptions down. She then led a discussion in English about words that described the two books. The children came up with the words "exciting", "interesting" and "calm" which Kay wrote on a large chart. The whole class decided together if the portion of the story each child had chosen was "exciting", "interesting", or "calm". The children's pictures and the phrases Kay had written in English were put up on a large chart next to the words that best described the scenes.

Exciting: She wakes up! The bears are staring at her.  
 She runs away!  
 Bears find leftover soup.  
 Bears find chairs.

Interesting: Goldilocks goes into the bears house.

Goldilocks breaks baby bear's chair.

Calm: Bears go on walk in woods.

Goldilocks eats soup.

By teaching lessons such as this one, beginning with the children's first language, Kay leads her students toward future academic success in English and, at the same time, allows them to develop their first language.

Many teachers working with second language students do not speak their students' first language. However, teachers can support the development of the first language even when they do not speak the first language. Vince has discovered how important it is for bilingual children to be able to work in school in their first language. In a response to a reading by Hudelson (1987) on the importance of supporting a child's native language, Vince wrote about his experiences with one of his students:

Chai came into my fourth grade classroom directly from the camps in Southeast Asia. She was the first second language student I was to come in contact with who felt good enough about her native language writing skills to employ them in class. I have to give the students in my class a lot of credit too, as they strongly supported and encouraged Chai in all her efforts. When she was finished writing a piece, she would read it to other Lao-speaking students in my class who would give suggestions on the content and share their ideas with her in Lao.

Vince described his doubts about letting Chai work in Lao because he somehow felt he wasn't "doing his job." She remained in his classroom for the rest of the year and seemed to be understanding some English, but she never spoke or wrote in English. The next year Vince met Chai's best friend who proudly explained that Chai was now speaking English and writing it too. Vince's wrote his reaction to the news:

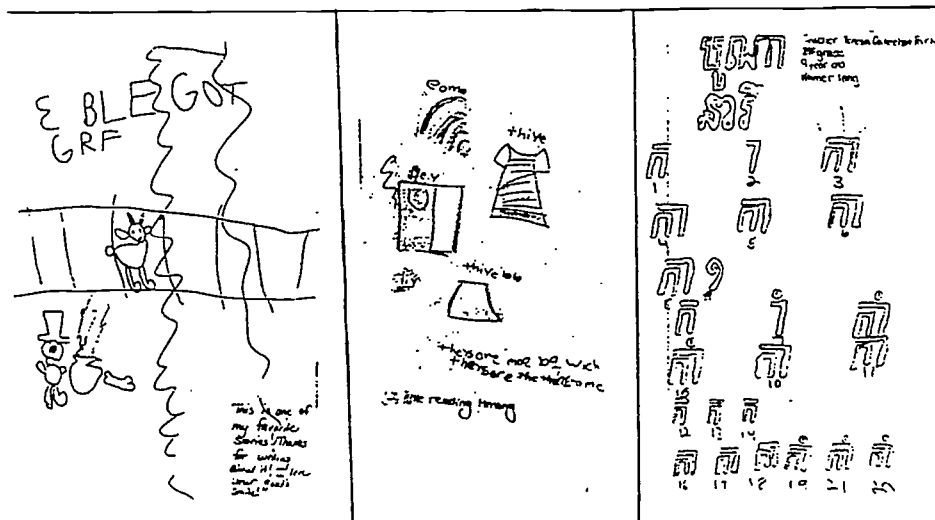
My first reaction was not one of achievement. It was rather a question as to what the fifth grade teacher had done that I hadn't done to get Chai to come this far along. Only later did it dawn on me that those early opportunities that empowered Chai were a big part of why she was comfortable speaking and writing English so soon after her arrival.

Vince had empowered Chai and allowed her to continue to develop in her first language. Sometimes, however, children are not literate in their first language, and it is difficult to know how to support them. However, when teachers show students the importance of their first language, they become empowered. Mo, a pre-first Hmong boy in Katie's classroom, proved that he could not only learn but also teach. Since Katie had several Hmong children in her class, she asked that a Hmong storyteller come to tell the story "Three Billy Goats Gruff." Before the storyteller came Katie read several versions of the folktale to her class. When the storyteller arrived, Katie insisted that he tell the

story to the entire class in Hmong. She reasoned that the children knew the story so well they would be able to follow along. She was correct. All the children, no matter what their language background, enjoyed the story.

The real strength for Mo of having the story told to the whole class in Hmong became more and more obvious. First, Mo wrote and drew in his journal about his favorite story, "Three Billy Goats Gruff." (Figure 2, Panel 1) Then Mo became a "teacher" of Hmong to his own teacher. In Panel 2 of Figure 2, Mo drew and labelled pictures to demonstrate what he had written. Below the pictures, he wrote in English "they are mog log wich theys are the thine to me" (These are Hmong language. These are the thing to me.). Katie responded telling him how she liked reading his Hmong. Katie reported that from the time of the visit from the Hmong storyteller, Mo showed an interest in school and pride in his first language and culture.

Teresa, a second grade teacher, also has found a way to support the first language of her students. After a class discussion on the importance of being bilingual, Navy, a Khmer student, took recess and lunch time for several days to produce a book of letters, numbers and words that would teach classmates and the teacher Khmer. Teresa had the book laminated and put in the class library (see Figure 2, Panel 3).



Panel 1

Panel 2

Panel 3

**Figure 2:** Illustrations made by Mo (Hmong) and Navy (Khmer) to help "teach" others their language.

Cross-age tutoring has been another excellent way to encourage students to read, write and interact in their first language even when the teacher only speaks English (Urzuía, 1990; Labbo & Teale, 1990). When upper grade bilingual students prepare to read to younger children and are matched with younger

children who speak the same first language, both age groups benefit. Urzúa (1990) has worked with teachers whose Southeast Asian sixth graders read to kindergartners who speak the same first language. Even when they read books in English, the sixth graders support the first language of the younger children by building background knowledge for the children in their shared first language. As the children interact in both languages, both age groups improve their oral and reading skills. In fact, sometimes the sixth graders take notes on the lessons they prepare and evaluate their teaching, thus developing more reading and writing skills.

When it is impossible to arrange for children to go from one classroom to another, pen pal letters can support the development of the first language. Sam's bilingual first graders write to pen pals in the fifth grade as well as to students in the teacher education program at a nearby college. Whenever possible, Spanish-speaking students in Sam's Spanish/English bilingual classroom are matched with pen pals who can write in Spanish. Sam has noticed that when his students correspond with fluent Spanish writers, his first graders write meaningfully. A series of letters between Elena, a first grader, and Carolina, show that writing in a student's first language encourages real communication. In one letter Carolina asked Elena, "¿Qué vas a hacer para el día de San Valentín? ¿Van a tener una fiesta en tu salón de clase?(What are you going to do on Valentine's Day? Are you going to have a party in your classroom?) Elena's next letter responded directly to Carolina's questions: "Mi ma es tro si ba aser una fiesta en valentin y ba mos a comer pastel y stigurs tu a mi ga Elena" (My teacher yes is going to have a party on Valentine's Day and we are going to eat cake and (have) stickers your friend Elena)

Children, like Elena, Navy, Mo and Chai, who are encouraged to use their first language meaningfully, learn to feel good about their first language and culture and about themselves. They build background knowledge in their first language that transfers to English instruction. It is difficult to know what the future holds for these children, but the hope is that they will maintain their first language as well as learn English. Bilingual citizens can contribute positively in a future where more and more bilingual people will be needed in the work force. Perhaps even more importantly, however, second language students need a positive self image to share with their own children. Nancy, a teacher of Portuguese descent who did not maintain her own first language and culture writes painfully of her loss. She does not want her Southeast Asian and Hispanic students to feel as she does when they are adults:

My grandmother went into a coma last week. She came to this country as a young bride and in all the years here, she never became a fluent English speaker. When my parents were in the school environment they were made to feel inferior to their English-speaking peers (They both dropped out early on in high school). These feelings of inferiority are carried with them today. When I entered school, I was encouraged by both the people at school and parents at home to act "more American" and stop using Portuguese (Pride in my culture was likewise discouraged.).

I just came home from the hospital. As I stroked my grandmother's arm and forehead, I spoke to her (I really believe she could hear me.), but I spoke to her in a language she doesn't really understand. She might know who was speaking, but she won't ever know what I really wanted to say to her. I don't ever want this situation to happen to my students. Yes, I do want them to become fluent in English and be able to compete with other students academically, but it is imperative to me that they retain pride in their culture and their bilingual abilities.

### Conclusion

Nancy's story has been repeated too often in this country. If second language learners are to succeed in schools, the mistakes of the past must not be repeated. It is important to look at the assumptions we have made about second language learners and turn to alternatives based on current research. Whole language principles, including the principle that learning should take place in the first language, offer a chance for second language learners to succeed academically and to become valuable bilingual members of our complex, multicultural society.



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