

*A collection of information and links to websites  
concerning  
Early Language Learning*

May 2010

**Languages in the News**

*Fostering Second Language Development in Young  
Children*

Though this article was written in 1995, its content is largely still valid. The article is meant for teachers teaching children whose native and target languages may be different. It helps dispel some of the myths that exist about second language learning and is meant for teachers unfamiliar with how second languages are learned. It seeks to help teachers understand the benefits of both languages and explains how to guide students to success in both languages without leaving the child's own language behind.

Click here to read [Fostering Second Language Development in Young Children](#) based on a report by Barry McLaughlin.

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*Bilingualism's Brain Benefits*

In this science notebook on the brain benefits of bilingualism, three studies conducted in Canada, India and Hong Kong, demonstrate that bilingualism may help to offset age-related declines in some mental performances. In the studies mentioned in this brief report, the response times of bilingual individuals and monolingual individuals were measured while distracted. The bilingual individuals in each study outperformed the monolinguals.

Click here to read [Bilingualism's Brain Benefits](#) by Shankar Vedantam.

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*Looking Closely at Second Language Learning*

This is a brief interview with then (2001) Shattuck Professor Catherine Snow at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. In the interview, Snow discusses the research on second language learning and English immersion with respect to

bilingual education. She argues that there is no critical period, after which the individual's capacity and ability to learn language becomes constrained or limited. There are advantages and disadvantages for language learners which vary with age. Snow contends that because older language learners have more resources on which to draw to learn languages and more quickly than children, we must not panic about pushing children into English as early as possible. Indeed, she recognizes that immigrant children need to learn English, in order to access the curriculum and participate in standardized testing programs. Still, she does not believe that if English language learners do not begin learning English right away, it will never be possible for them to become fluent speakers of English.

Click here to read [Looking Closely at Second Language Learning](#) by Abigail Bucuvalas.

**Fairfax Foreign Language Advocacy for Grade  
Schools (FLAGS)**

Fairfax FLAGS is a group of parents, students, alumni and concerned community members advocating for increased funding to save key programs at risk for FY 2011, including elementary school foreign language – immersion and FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools).

In addition to information for the Fairfax community, there are links to excerpts from various studies, articles, and books by language experts. The site is organized in sections that link articles on the impact of second language learning on cognitive development, language development, math skills, and bilingual vs. immersion learning.

Visitors will learn much about the steps that need to be taken and the resources that need to be collected in order to advocate for threatened foreign language programs. Because of this group's strong advocacy for early language learning, the Fairfax County School Board amended the superintendent's proposed budget to put FLES back into the division's baseline budget for FY11.

Click here to access [FLAGS](#).

**Learning World Languages and Cultures in California: A Stimulus for Academic and Economic Success<sup>1</sup>**

This document is produced by the California Foreign Language Project (CFLP) of the Stanford University School of Education. Due to the challenges facing California in this global recession – namely, a \$42 billion dollar budget deficit, the CFLP offers a framework for long-term solutions to California’s economic crisis which rely on developing the potential *and* existing foreign and second language and cultures resources in the state. The CFLP recognizes that solutions to California’s economic crisis, must involve partnering with other nations. In order to develop those partnerships, California must prepare its students now to be able to cross linguistic and cultural borders. That requires an ambitious foreign language and cultures education which starts early and makes obligatory that California students exit the California school system with proficiency in a language other than English.

Click here to read [Learning World Languages and Cultures in California: A Stimulus for Academic and Economic Success](#) by Tracy Steele, Lindsay Oishi, Kathleen O’Connor, and Duarte Silva.

**Promoting Literacy Development in Bilingual Contexts<sup>2</sup>**

This is a brief research paper which seeks to lay out 3 key questions in determining the best academic programs for minority language learners and ESL. The author concludes that because these 3 questions are not sufficiently researched, the best way of teaching is not yet fully known or vetted, calling for action in this area.

3 key questions noted were:

1. What are the different models for providing literacy and language instruction for bilingual children?
2. What language skills must be promoted for bilingual students?

<sup>1</sup> Link submitted by Dr. Jacque Bott Van Houten, NELL Vice President.

<sup>2</sup> Link submitted by Concha Marin.

3. What do we know about instructional techniques/best practices for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) and French as a Second Language (FSL) students?

Click here to access the [Promoting Literacy Development in Bilingual Contexts](#) by Penny Collins, Ph.D.

**The World Speaks French: The French Language Initiative<sup>3</sup>**

This Wiki is maintained by a task force of the American Association of Teachers of French, but is open to anyone interested in advocating for, starting, or improving French programs.

The wiki is broken down into 9 parts:

- Overview of Kit
- Advancing Arguments for Learning French
- Cultivating Allies for French Programs
- Advocating Trilingualism for Spanish-Language Students
- Responding to Program Threats
- Advocating at College and University Levels
- Using Technology for Promotion and Advocacy
- Finding Resources
- Acknowledgements

Click here to access [The World Speaks French: The French Language Initiative](#).

This issue of *Newsworthy* was compiled by Tammy Dann. Send any comments, questions, or information for future issues of *Newsworthy* to Tammy Dann at [trdann@q.com](mailto:trdann@q.com).

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<sup>3</sup> Link submitted by Dr. Gladys Lipton.