

Newsworthy

December 2011

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

Languages in the News

Punjab Charter School to Open in West Sacramento

The *Sacramento Bee* reports that a Punjabi public charter school is opening this fall, the first of its kind in the nation. The school has the support of local Indian American families who are looking forward to providing their children with Punjabi language instruction in the school. Some critics worry that the rise of charter schools catering to one ethnicity may fuel divisions in the community, but others say that the school, open to all, will provide children with additional language skills and cultural education will give them a head start in the 21st century workplace.

Click here to read [*Punjab Charter School to Open in West Sacramento.*](#)

Local School Tries for Hmong Dual-Immersion

The same issues addressed in anticipation of opening the Punjabi school were also addressed when a Hmong dual immersion program was approved in March of 2011 in Sacramento. More than half of the enrolled students at the designated elementary school already speak Hmong. The dual immersion program will begin in kindergarten and first grade, with 90 percent of instruction in Hmong and 10 percent in English. As students advance through the grades, use of Hmong will decrease until the 5th or 6th grades when all students will be taught in English. The district already has Spanish and Chinese.

Click here to access [*Local School Tries for Hmong Dual Immersion.*](#)

Hearing Bilingual: How Babies Sort Out Language

This *New York Times* article summarizes several research studies that illustrate how bilingual infants distinguish between more than one language. By examining how infants process language in the brain—before they even start speaking—researchers are learning that children from both monolingual and bilingual homes have the ability to discriminate between multiple languages at six months old. However, by the age of 12 months, only bilingual babies retained this “cognitive flexibility.” By studying infants and language, researchers hope to learn how brain growth is affected by language acquisition at a young age.

Click here to read [*Hearing Bilingual: How Babies Sort Out Language.*](#)

Students Speaking Native Language Do Well

This brief article out of Columbia, Missouri, reports on the results from a survey given to 408 Mexican-American students. The study found that the Latino students who maintained their native languages and embraced their cultural heritages received higher grade point averages than those Latinos who only spoke English at home and in school. Since research also shows that Latino students have high dropout rates, the researcher recommends that schools welcome and support English learners’ home cultures and native languages to promote their academic success.

Click here to read [*Science News: Students Speaking Native Language Do Well.*](#)

Tips and Tools for Early Language Learning

U.S. Department of State: Diplomacy in Action

This website allows visitors to view events around the world from the perspective of the United States. The tabs include: About State, Policy Issues, Countries and Issues, Economics and Energy, Arms Control and Security, Democracy and Global Affairs, Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Assistance and Development.

There are videos of press briefings on such topics as Asia Overview: Protecting American Interests in China and Asia, World Water Day, Remarks after the International Conference on the Libyan Crisis (by U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton) to name a few.

This is a site that could be used by mature upper elementary students, but is better geared for middle school students and older. There are links to information about passports, international travel tips and warnings, youth and education.

The Youth and Education tab has information about Virtual Student Foreign Service, Fulbright Exchange Program, and a link to their student website, which has activities that teach about the US State Department—like helping Pat, your passport pal, connect names of countries to their flags.

Click here to access [U.S. Department of State, Diplomacy in Action](#) website.

Radio Junior

Radio Junior streams kid-themed music in French. There are several “zones,” including a parent's zone, with tips and information on regional activities around France; and a kid zone with music and news about teen stars. Some other sections list bios about musicians that play children's music and a section with recipes (appropriate for kids to make) where you can listen to the audio instructions for the recipe or print out the recipe.

Click here to access [Radio Junior](#).

Uruguay 360

This site is a virtual tour of Uruguay. It is a resource that provides culture, context, and geography. There are panoramic views of the many sites of Uruguay that would allow teachers to take their students on a “tour” of the country.

Click here to access [Uruguay 360](#).

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.

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