

Jintangka marlpa jungu nyinanjaku

What is Bilingual Education?

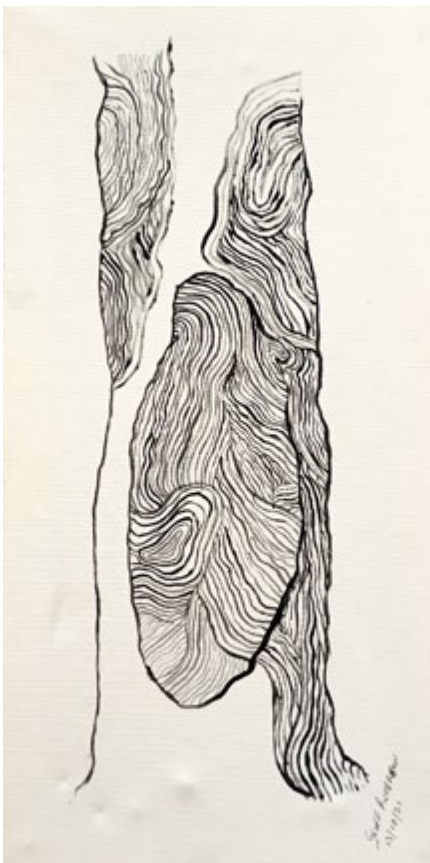


FIRST
LANGUAGES
AUSTRALIA

The title of this discussion paper *Jintangka marlpa jungu nyinanjaku* means 'when we're all together, we're talking' in Warlpiri.

Jintangka (as one) *marlpa* (company) *nyinanjaku* (to sit).

Provided by Barbara Martin.



Mumbir

Scar trees on Wiradjuri country (2021).

Geoff Anderson

Introduction

Bilingual Education (BE) is an approach to curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment that uses more than one language to teach subject areas of the curriculum, such as Maths, Science, History or Geography, rather than only learning language/s as a subject.

BE has a strong academic evidence base and has been used with success in many education systems around the world including in First Nations contexts in Australia. In BE students use their first language (L1) to learn new knowledge, skills and understandings while they are learning Standard Australian English (SAE).

There are a number of reasons that Australian First Nations people have given for supporting BE in their schools:

- The connection between language and identity – *Our kids don't just speak Warlpiri, they are Warlpiri* (Yuendumu School Council, 2017)
- Wellbeing and resilience - as a 'defence' against the overwhelming dominance of English language and the practices of mainstream society. *Language is like a tree: it makes you stand firm in country, gives you a sense of identity... Language is a defence; it is kurdiji, a shield. It is strength.* (Wanta Jampijinpa Pawu-kurlpurlurnu, Holmes and Box, 2008:21)
- Academic learning outcomes – *Bilingual Education is not something that is 'warm and fuzzy', it is an evidence-based approach that empowers yolŋu students to learn through their yolŋu language'* (Dhâruk from School Council, Shepherdson College 2020)
- To maintain cultural heritage and identity while also learning English – *Bilingual Education remains the best-case scenario for Aboriginal students to learn English, at the same time as learning in and maintaining their mother tongue languages.* (Clayton Cruse (Adnyamathanha and Antikirinya Martu Yankunytjatjara), Voices of Country, 2023)
- To provide better post-school pathways – *Nganaŋa kulini, bilingual education-awanu nganampa tjitji tjuŋa iwara wiru tjuŋangka ankuku kuula wiyaringkula waaka wiru tjuŋa mantijira. [We believe that bilingual education will lead to better postschool pathways for our children.]* Pitjantjajtara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee (PYEC) 2021:6.
- The right of Indigenous peoples to control the education provided to their children and to ensure that it is appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching. *Flipping the curriculum process to start with First Nation's languages and cultures provides a rich curriculum foundation, not just for learning the language and culture of their communities and families, but also learning the second language English. Through a bilingual/bicultural curriculum First Nation's people can regain control of the education of their children.* (Yalbilinya Focus Group, 10/11/2022, Double Tree Hilton Hotel, Alice Springs.)

Background

First Nations Australians have always been multilingual, using more than one language to communicate with different groups, for different purposes and in different contexts. Words, phrases, and concepts from the range of languages are used in ways that interact and overlap as part of a language repertoire. The British settlers brought with them a monolingual mindset in which communication occurs in only one language at a time. Communication in English was deemed to be the only communication of value. Policies were imposed which denied First Nations people's access to their languages and cultures through forced removal from Country and family, the forced imposition of school curriculum policies and the denial of access to services in languages other than English. Despite these destructive policies the language use of First Nations people has remained typically multilingual. The introduction of English into the language ecology of Australia has seen it used and adapted by First Nations people to meet their needs and purposes, creating new forms and dialects that have allowed them to express world views for which SAE has no words.



Kenmore Park students learning on Country at Wamitjara, APY Lands, SA.
Photo: South Australian Department for Education.

First nations language communities are unique, and may include any combination of:

- heritage languages of that place, or from elsewhere,
- new Indigenous languages, including varieties of creole and formally mixed languages,
- English, standard and non-standard varieties.

In some communities, children come to school speaking a heritage First Nations language as their main or first language (L1). This may be a language belonging to their family or it could be a lingua franca of the community. In some communities, children

may speak a variety of English while hearing or identifying with a heritage language. For other communities, children may come to school speaking English, and identifying with a heritage language that may no longer be in daily use. In school they will encounter a variety of English used in more formal and public settings such as government, schools and universities and written in dictionaries, style guides and grammars that the Australian Curriculum calls Standard Australian English (SAE). In a multilingual environment SAE is another variety or form of language added to the languages already spoken and used by the community.

Bilingual programs can act in different ways. They can act to add an additional language to students' repertoire, or they can act to replace one language and culture with another. Those programs that introduce a second or additional language and culture in ways that don't displace any of the other languages are additive bilingual programs while the others are known as subtractive bilingual programs. The imposition of English in missions, dormitories and schools across Australia post colonisation was intended to act as subtractive bilingualism leading to monolingualism in English. See appendix 1 for an outline of different types of bilingual education and their potential to produce strong additive bilingualism or to act as subtractive bilingualism.

The concept of additive bilingualism is particularly important for those First Nations students whose bilingualism is invisible. These are students, often living in urban areas who may start school speaking a form of English, Aboriginal English, or creole that might sound like SAE but with systematic differences in sounds, grammar and meaning. When these differences are not recognised students typically do not receive the explicit instruction required to add SAE to their repertoire.

Experience in BE from around the world suggests that the longer both languages can be maintained and used throughout the years of schooling, the better the learning outcomes (see Cummins, 2021). Extending the use of First Nation languages across a range of learning areas and domains, and stages of schooling also works to achieve 'balance' between the languages and SAE when lifestyles are changing, and SAE language and culture are so dominant.



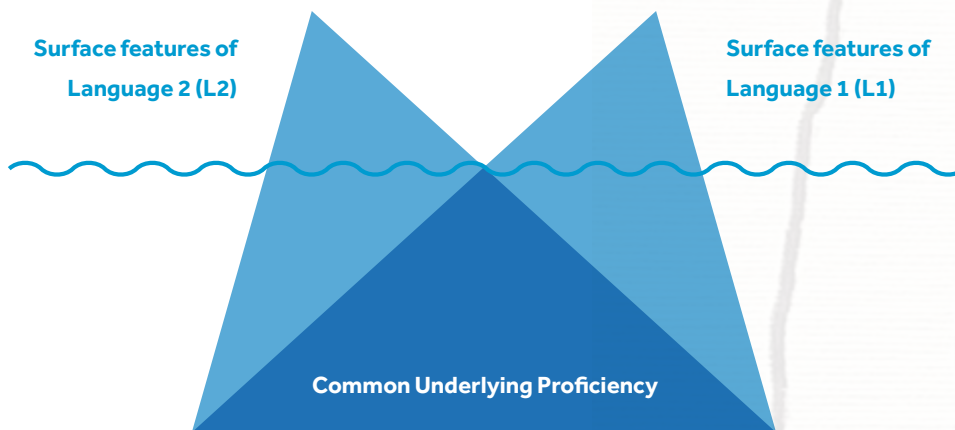
Fleurette Mapu Karui teaching Murrinpatha language in Year 3/4 supported by Belinda Heagney. Photo: OLSH Thamurrurr Catholic School.

How does bilingual education work?

Given the expectations that school will be the place where First Nations children who speak an Indigenous as their L1 learn to speak SAE, some teachers and parents might think they should spend all their time speaking SAE. However, evidence gathered over a number of years, in schools around the world have shown that this is not necessarily the case. These experiences have shown that students from minority language communities tend to develop stronger skills and achieve higher learning outcomes in the majority language (i.e. English in Australia) in programs that provide time for instruction in both languages than those programs that only teach through the majority language.

Cummins (2000, 2018, 2021) suggests that one reason for the success of BE is that languages are not kept in separate containers in the brain. Learners have a Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) to learn and think deeply about ideas. Knowledge and skills can be expressed in more than one language. Knowledge and skills learnt in one language can be transferred between languages as more languages are learnt.

Cummins Iceberg Model of Language Interdependence



Research shows that when learning, bilingual learners use all of their languages to think critically and to problem solve around ideas they have read or heard in one language (see Garcia, Lin and May 2017, Baker, 2011, Garcia 2009). Susan Poetsch (2017) and Emma Browne (2022) have described how learners and teachers in two schools in the Northern Territory use their first languages, Arrernte and Warlpiri, as well as Kriol and English within single lessons. Using language flexibly like this allows for active learning and teaching that responds to the needs of the students.

In BE both learners and teachers are using their first language as a scaffold to support the learning of the second language. Learners (L1) need to learn enough of the second language (L2) to be able to learn through it. In explaining this process of second language development, Cummins has distinguished between developing social or conversational fluency in a language – what he calls BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). BICS is the ability to use a language to talk about things or experiences in face-to-face and familiar contexts. CALP is the language that is needed to talk, read or write about more abstract ideas without a familiar context. BICS can be developed in a relatively short time while CALP takes much longer. This means it is important that teachers and learners are able to continue using the L1 to support and scaffold learning in the L2 throughout the years of schooling.



Aaron Fraser teaching Pitjantjatjara phonics at Kenmore Park Anangu School. Photo: South Australian Department for Education.

In addition to the use of the first language to support knowledge generation, there is also strong evidence for the recognition and valuing of the languages of bilingual children, as essential to the development of their identities as learners. The support from First Nations parents and communities for BE has consistently highlighted the importance of their children being supported to negotiate their identities as First Nations learners.

Developing a bilingual curriculum program

BE programs should be thought about as a way to use a learner's languages to support engagement, interaction and learning to develop deeper levels of knowledge from all cultures and not as two parallel and separate language programs. The teaching program needs to integrate language and content, balancing the development of the First Nations language/s, English and curriculum content.

The use of any First Nations language in a school program needs to be developed in partnership with the language community. This provides opportunities for community members to be involved in real decision making about how the Australian Curriculum (AC) is enacted in their schools. These decisions should be recorded in a whole school curriculum plan that outlines:

- What is best to be taught in each language and at what level.
- The best time to teach content in relation to child development but also the time of year as many First Nations curricular are organised around the cycles of the land and community.
- How and why this content should be taught, and who should teach it.
- How to know, for each language, that the children have achieved the standard in that language.
- How the students' learning will be assessed and recorded to recognise all their learning, not just learning in English.
- How schools will report to parents.

The implementation of the program will require:

- **A bilingual/bicultural workforce with the capacity to teach through the First Nations language/s as well as SAE.**
- **A range of community and school-based instructional materials in the First Nations language including print, visual and digital materials that support the teaching and learning of identified Learning Areas across the Australian Curriculum.**
- **Professional support for planning and delivery by bilingual teaching teams.**
- **Language workers and researchers, over and above the teachers required to teach the program, to develop a range of teaching materials for teaching across the curriculum in First Nations language.**

While there are several different types of bilingual programs, there are also many variations within each type. Each school identifies a plan for how they will organize and sustain the teaching of both languages across the years of schooling, considering the issues that impact each school and community differently. Such considerations may include:

- The purpose of the program – is it to learn a second or additional language (SAE or L2); or to maintain and enrich an endangered language through use in teaching and learning; or to use a first language (L1) to make the school curriculum more accessible? What is the students’ first language (L1), and how will it be used for teaching and learning?
- The language ecology of the community – are the children hearing the language used outside school, on what contexts and for what purposes?
- The language profile of staff in the school- who can teach the language and what can they teach in the language?
- Learning resources – what resources are available to teach curriculum content in each language?
- Staff development and parental involvement – are there teachers who are qualified to teach the language and through the language? Are there parents willing and available to support the teaching of the language in class?
- The balance of language use and allocation of language in the classroom – how will the language be used, for what areas of learning and for how long?

Below are a number of different models taken from Peeter Mehisto (2012). They are designed to be strong additive bilingual programs, but with different L1:L2 balances at different times. All provide for the use of both languages to be maintained throughout the school years. Some discussion points are provided as a way of starting the conversation around what might work in different schools and communities.

L1 is the language that children speak as their primary language outside school. It may be that this is a heritage language that is still used every day across all generations and for all purposes; or it could be a new Indigenous language, a creole, or other lingua franca. It is assumed that one language will be SAE. It may be that communities want to use BE to revitalize a sleeping language while teaching and learning is also occurring in the L1 and SAE. In this case, a third language (L3) could also be factored in.

Model 1. This is the model most commonly used for languages that are still used as a first language for children such as Warlpiri, Pitjantjatjara, Djambarrpuyngu, Eastern Arrernte, Western Aranda, Dhuwaya

K/P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	L1 used for teaching across the curriculum and is taught as a subject									
	Children start learning SAE as an additional language (L2) and it is gradually introduced as language for teaching across the curriculum.									

- Students come to school speaking a First Nations language, which could be a new language, a form of English or creole, as their first language (L1).
- The L1 is taught as a subject and is used as the main language of teaching in the early years (usually up to year 3 or 4), while the students are learning to speak SAE (L2).
- As children move through the years at school, they transfer the knowledge and skills they have learned through their L1 to learning through English while continuing to learn their L1 and some subjects through their L1.

- o **A planned and structured approach to teaching SAE and through SAE such as Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) or Immersion is used. This should include using the L1 to scaffold and support learning SAE.**

Some things to consider in developing a model like this:

- Are parents comfortable with delaying learning the curriculum through English?
- Are all school leaders and teachers committed to working in a bilingual/bicultural team?
- Has the school developed a whole school curriculum plan that shows what subjects and topics will be taught in each language and when?
- Has the school identified indicators that show when students are ready to start learning through English?
- Are there teachers and learning resources including vocabulary for teaching content from all areas of the curriculum in L1?
- Are there strategies in place to support the transfer of knowledge and skills to the L2?
- Are there community language teachers able to work in a teaching team to support the teaching of L1 where qualified teachers are not available?
- Are there training opportunities available for teachers to learn to teach content through the L1?
- Are professional development programs available for developing curricula materials and methodology in both L1 and EAL/D (English as an Additional Language or Dialect).

Model 2. This is the model sometimes referred to as the 50:50 model. In this model students use both their first language and the second language for equal amounts of time in the day. Both languages are used for core academic subjects.

K/P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Learning and teaching L1 throughout the school										
Learning and teaching L2 throughout the school										

- o All students come to school speaking a L1. It could be a First Nations Language, including a creole, lingua franca, a new language, or it could be SAE.
- o A second language (L2), which could be a First Nations language or SAE is taught and used for teaching curriculum content, including reading and writing, from the beginning of school.
- o Many 50:50 programs integrate L1 speakers with L2 learners of the language in the same class
- o A planned and structured approach to teaching the L2 such as CLIL or Immersion is used.

Some things to consider in developing a model like this:

- Parents who want their children to begin learning a second language and experiencing intercultural learning activities from an early age might like this model.
- Has the school developed a whole school curriculum plan that shows what subjects and topics will be taught in each language and when?

- Are there teachers who are trained in L2 teaching and learning methodologies like CLIL or in the use of immersion pedagogy?
- Are there teachers and resources for teaching content through both the L1 and L2 throughout the years of schooling?
- Are there teachers able to work effectively in a team, respecting and making space within the school culture and environment for both languages?
- Are professional development opportunities for curricula and teaching methodology in both languages available?

Model 3. This model could be used for learning English in many remote communities or for communities that would like to revitalize their language.

K/P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Teaching and learning through L2										
L1/L3 taught as a subject					Teaching through the L1/L3					

- Students come to school speaking their L1 which could be a First Nations Language including a new language, creole, or variety of English or SAE.
- Students might also have a heritage language (L3) they identify with and the community wishes them to learn.
- Students start to learn curriculum content as they are learning the L2, which could be a First Nations Language or SAE, through Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) or Immersion approaches.
- Be clear about what language is actually the students' L1. Sometimes children are speaking a new language, a creole or form of English as their L1, while the community wishes that they learn a heritage language (L3) as well as SAE. In this case the L1 should be used to support the teaching and learning of both SAE (L2) and L3.
- L1 is taught in a language and culture program and then used for teaching in the older years including teaching reading and writing.
- Literacy skills taught/used in the L2 can be transferred to the L1.

Some things to consider in developing a model like this:

- The Early Years learning activities are activity based, experiential, and are good for teaching and learning a new language.
- Students develop an intercultural/bilingual frame of mind very early.
- Activities such as Learning on Country and other cultural activities may be more appropriately taught in the older years.
- Does the L2 have a strong culture of literacy with resources and materials for teaching?
- Are there teachers who are trained in L2 teaching and learning methodologies like CLIL or the use of Immersion pedagogies?
- Are there teachers and resources available for the teaching of L1/L3 in the primary and older years?
- What opportunities will there be for the children to use their L1 to help them with understanding new ideas, to understand the L2/L3, to talk with classmates or to use all their languages to do research and presentations throughout.

Literacy/Biliteracy

Not all bilingual programs have to focus on developing print literacy in both languages. Some programs may only focus on using the First Nations language orally. This might be because there is not a written spelling system; there are no written materials in the language; there are few teachers or adults literate enough to teach others to read and write; or it is not the community's priority.

However, many First Nations communities want their children to learn to read and write in their language. There are many reasons for this including recognition of the power and prestige associated with the written language and the emphasis on written activities in school pedagogies. Written language also provides opportunities for recording and documenting languages that are no longer spoken every day.

Print literacy in both English and First Nations languages is still emerging as a social and cultural practice in many First Nations communities and children may start school with little experience and understanding of the kinds of written language used in school. They may, however, have had other experiences including oral story telling; visual texts such as body painting; the extended stories contained in songlines and represented in dance as well as engagement with group texts such as hymns and prayers. While it is important to recognise and build on the knowledge that the children bring with them as learners, it is also important to develop routines that provide rich meaningful experiences that actively engage students with reading and writing to:

- build interest in literacy as something relevant, enjoyable and useful in the children's lives
- develop real world knowledge and well-developed vocabulary to support comprehension
- develop understandings of the concepts of print– words, letters, and punctuation
- develop knowledge of the sounds of language (phonological awareness)
- develop knowledge of the symbols which represent these sounds (phonics knowledge).

Ideally these experiences would be in the language that the students understand. Even when the focus is not on reading and writing in their L1 there is an important role for talking about reading and writing in their L1 for developing and understanding how literacy works in any language. Bilingual programs should provide biliteracy experiences that move between the oral and the written, the first and second languages, the local context and the wider contexts including academic/school ways of talking and writing about the world (Hornberger and Link, 2012)



See the way that the local teachers use Yarlielingo to introduce Early Years students to literacy using English books: [Literacy strategies in Indigenous Early Years](#)

Localised curriculum resources

The use of any First Nations language in school requires the development of materials that reflect the structure of the language and ways of constructing knowledge through the language and culture. Resources that draw on local knowledge and students' learning experiences outside school are rarely available commercially.

Once developed, localised resources can be shared with other schools and regions. This provides opportunities for First Nations language teachers to plan and learn together in a professional network and learning community within and across schools and regions. These professional learning networks and learning communities provide opportunities for:

- First Nations teachers, community members and Elders to develop curriculum in their own language bringing specific knowledge and skills in the school community.
- School-leavers to continue to have a role within the school as language workers, teachers and researchers.
- Identifying the content and skills in the AC learning areas that can be taught in first language.
- First Nations teachers and community members to be part of the process that takes students from localised learning, to the AC and through to Senior Secondary studies.

Example: Teaching of fractions

Students speak a First Nations language as their first language. The school teaches a formal Language and Culture program while all other curriculum areas are formally taught through SAE. There are language speaking assistant teachers in each classroom to support the teaching and learning as required. An experienced assistant teacher (a strong speaker of the students' L1 and with three years of accredited training) has identified that students consistently have difficulty learning and working with the concept of fractions. There is no direct translation of this idea in their language. She thinks about how to talk about fractions with the children using their L1. She then talks about her ideas about how to talk about fractions with her colleagues during morning tea before trialling these ideas with her students.

There are at least two steps to this process: ensuring that there are speakers who understand the concept of fractions and then exploring and developing ways that this can be expressed or at least described in language. This is not necessarily a simple one day or afternoon activity but may need to be developed over time and include time for workshopping the language that could be used to explaining fractions by going through a series of activities using fractions, testing these ideas with other speakers, with students, then reviewing and documenting this.

There are a number of ways to embed this work into the school and system processes through:

- school and community workshops that facilitate consultation with community members and Elders
- inclusion of non-Indigenous teachers through regular team planning
- involvement of specialist staff such as curriculum specialists, age level specialists, linguists provided by Departments of Education
- partnerships with external consultants and organisations such as universities and language centres
- school literacy and numeracy plans, school action plans, and documentation of plans and programs.

Examples of localised curriculum materials currently used in schools

- Garma Maths and Galtha Rom Curriculum at Yirrkala
- Warlpiri Curriculum Cycle at Lajamanu, Yurntumu (Yuendumu), Wirliyajarrayi (Willowra) and Nyirripi
- Intelyape lyape Akaltye Arrernte curriculum
- Picture and online dictionaries available in many languages from Aboriginal publishing houses such as IAD Press, Magabala Books, and regional language centres
- The Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages is a digital archive of written materials that have been developed in languages from across the Northern Territory. It now provides support for communities and schools to access and use these materials in a variety of new ways
- The Territory and State libraries also provide rich resources. For example, the NT Library hosts a digital keeping place called Community Stories for local Indigenous communities to publish materials that are of social, cultural or historical value
- The Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics (CALL) and Batchelor Press at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, collaborate with communities and local language centres to document languages, and produce and publish high quality books and teaching resources in both digital and print forms
- The Indigenous Literacy Foundation (ILF) works with an increasing number of communities and schools across Australia to produce and publish high quality books in Indigenous languages
- Media organisations such as TEABBA, VAMP TV
- The CSIRO Two Way Science handbook, [Two-way Science](#), Chris Deslandes, Sally Deslandes, David Broun, Cameron Hugh, Fiona Walsh, Felicity Bradshaw, Joanna Griffith, 9781486313082 (csiro.au)
- [ICTV Play - Indigenous Community Videos](#)
- [First Languages Australia Resources for Language Programs](#)

Teaching and learning in bilingual education

Quality bilingual education is based on good teaching and learning. Similar strategies can be used for teaching in both languages so that the learners are focused on the content and not on learning the teaching/learning activity. However, this may not work where there are differences between the languages and ways of being, doing and knowing that are specific to First Nations languages and cultures. Quality teaching for First Nations students includes recognition and pedagogies that are typically:

- relationships-based
- based on lifelong and life-wide continuous teaching, learning and assessment
- based in communities of learners in which learning is a collective exercise which children and teachers undertake together, with the older or more knowledgeable person leading the learning
- give independence and respect to individual learners and the learners are expected to take responsibility for themselves
- use real life experiences allowing learners to learn by exploring, through play and informal learning experience, and responding to a range of texts and modes including Country, land, paintings, sand painting, body painting, sign language, on Country and in the classroom
- have a high expectation that all children will achieve
- are based on teachers modelling behaviour and skills for students.

From: Blitner, Stephanie, Dobson, V., Martin, B., Oldfield, N., Oliver, R., Palmer, I. and Riley, R. (2000) *Strong Voices*, Batchelor, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education.



Year 3/4 students creating a bilingual Murrinhpatha/English map of Wadeye as part of History unit with a focus on communities. Photo: OLSH Thamurrurr Catholic School.



Marianne Fraser teaching a Pitjantjatjara lesson at Kenmore Park Anangu School. Photo: South Australian Department for Education.

Using two or more languages in the classroom

While the research shows that bilingual learners will use all their languages for problem solving and learning, there are many communities where people feel strongly about children learning to keep their languages separate and speaking 'strong' language. Separation of the languages is often recommended to give children the opportunity to hear and to become familiar with the elements and structure of each language. It has often been the practice that teachers separate the languages used in the classroom by teaching a given subject or topic primarily through one or the other language. The school curriculum plan should identify the subjects/topics to be taught in each language. Decisions about which subjects and topics are taught in each language may be made based on the resources available or the expertise of the First Nations language teacher.

Other methods used to separate languages have included:

Place based

- one classroom is used for one language and a different classroom for the other language
- areas in a single classroom are marked out so each language can be separated
- languages could be separated by colours and then compared to show the differences.

Person

- one person speaks each language.

It is important for developing bilingual children to learn to move between the languages. Teachers need to think about opportunities for cross-linguistic work that allows learners to think deeply and to use their languages flexibly. This is not the same as translating from one language to another or having teachers translate from one language to another. Some ways of doing this might include:

Code switching - switching from one language to another. This can be used to:

- focus student attention

- clarify or reinforce understanding in both languages
- scaffolding the learning of new ideas by providing definitions in the other language,
- providing summaries of a lesson using code- switching to focus on the language structures that give specific meanings.

A cycle of preview/view/review

- one language is used to introduce the lesson or idea, the next lesson is taught in the other language. The second lesson and content are reviewed in the first language
- in the early stages of bilingualism, the first language of the learners may be alternated with the language being learnt within a single lesson eg: introducing specialized disciplinary vocabulary in L2, teaching the meaning through the L1 and then reviewing in L2 again. This teaches specialized vocabulary while understanding the content.

Translanguaging

- hearing, signing, or reading lessons in one language followed by oral discussion, the writing of passages and development of projects and experiments in the other language.

Co-languaging

- having both languages present on a page, or screen.

Language awareness

- comparing and contrasting vocabulary, structures, and ways of expressing ideas in each language through bilingual word lists.

See Garcia (2009) for more discussion of bilingual practices in the classroom.

It is important to consider why children are using language. If it is for conveying meaning, then teaching should focus on the meaning and not on the language. The teacher may decide to provide some instruction by repeating the word, phrase or sentence like parents and carers would instruct their children naturally at home. The teacher may make a mental note of issues and then focus on the language later. Teachers need to consider what is acceptable in the community in terms of multilingual language use.



In this video the teachers from Warreber and Badu Island show how they use three languages in the classroom: [Using three languages to teach literacy](#)

Developing the teaching team for a bilingual school

BE is a specialised program and does require the school to target its resources in ways that ensure the inclusion and development of specific expertise. This includes expertise related to understanding the nature of community and individual bilingualism, how languages are used and how languages are taught. See appendix 2 for an outline of the expertise required in a bilingual school.

It is important to have the right people to teach First Nations languages including Elders who may hold the requisite knowledge in their heads. It may be that the most 'qualified' teachers for teaching Indigenous languages are those who speak the language but do not hold formal teaching qualifications. Not all registered teachers who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander will be speakers of a First Nations language and in a position to teach the language, or through the language. Even fewer will have had any specialist training in how to do so. Teaching and learning in a school context requires that teachers have qualifications aligned with competencies identified within the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) professional standards and be registered by state based teacher accreditation bodies. Yalbilinya (2022) has elaborated many of the issues around building a qualified workforce for teaching and using First Nations languages in schools.

There may be few opportunities within the school systems for professional learning in BE. Systems will need to find ways to build system and school-wide, teams of highly capable teachers, including teachers who take an active leadership role beyond the classroom.

Some ways to do this include:

- the development of documented professional learning plans for school leaders and teachers including teachers of First Nation languages
- mentoring and coaching for First Nations teachers from Elders and expert language speakers
- teachers visiting each other's classrooms
- opportunities for teachers to have school leaders, including Elders and expert language speakers, observe and discuss their work with them
- recruiting staff with a multilingual mindset and specific expertise in language education
- offering formal training staff to address identified needs
- providing a culturally safe workplace for all First Nations staff
- providing opportunities for languages teachers to learn on-Country with Elders and expert language speakers
- providing opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles outside the classroom
- professional learning and support for strong community leadership and governance.

Example : A Professional Learning Community

Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Pirrjirdi Jaru (Warlpiri Triangle) is a professional learning community that has been meeting together since 1985. It brings together school and community leaders and bilingual teaching teams in Warlpiri communities to:

- review and provide feedback on the implementation of schooling in their communities
- develop curriculum
- develop teaching practice of Warlpiri educators and bilingual teaching teams.

The full Warlpiri Triangle meets once a year in week 6 of a school term and is held in either Yuendumu or Lajamanu. Typically, the Warlpiri Triangle workshop has a focus on curriculum development.

Jinta Jarrimi workshops are smaller workshops focussing on development of planning and teaching practice for a specific cohort of students such as Early Childhood, Primary or Secondary. Jinta Jarrimi is held in week 6 of each of the other school terms in one of the Warlpiri communities that did not host Warlpiri Triangle. There are three Jinta Jarrimi workshops each year.

All workshops are funded by the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT), and the workshops are facilitated by the Teacher-linguists at Yuendumu School, Lajamanu School and Willowra School and an organising group of Warlpiri educators from across all Warlpiri speaking communities. Further support for the facilitation of sessions is provided by Department of Education advisors, linguists and subject specialists as required.

The workshops address ways to improve planning, teaching and assessment practices of assistant teachers, and also teaching teams. These workshops are some of the few specific professional development opportunities for educators working in a bilingual context. The workshops provide a collaborative space that allows the four Warlpiri communities to learn from each other, and to work together with Elders and senior Warlpiri educators to develop curriculum. Warlpiri educators believe that the workshops are important and support them to become better educators. It is the aspiration of Warlpiri educators that these workshops continue to remain strong and protected from the high turn-over of non-Warlpiri staff in Warlpiri Schools (pers. comm from Barbara Martin, Sharon Anderson and Fiona Morris, 2nd September 2020).

See also Emma Brown and Fiona Napaljarri Gibson [Communities of Practice in the Warlpiri Triangle](#)

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Teachers, Janita Nampijinpa Gallagher and Zanaida Nampijinpa Gibson, practicing reading sound posters, a daily activity in each class. Photo: Nyirripi School.

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Glossary of Terms

Word/Term	Definition
Bilingual Education	Planned instruction through the medium of two languages. In Australian schools working with First Nations students, this has meant the use of a First Nations language and Standard Australian English.
L1	The language that is the students' preferred or strongest language. It may or may not be their mother tongue or home language. It may, instead, be the language of the community or their peers, e.g. when children speak Kriol or another First Nations language used as a lingua franca. A person's preferred language may be different for different areas of experience. Young children starting school will speak language at an age-appropriate level and will require further development and teaching to develop adult capacity.
L2	A language that is learned as an additional, second or even third or fourth language in addition to their L1. A second language (L2) can be learned informally at home or in the community or through planned and structured teaching in school.
Standard Australian English (SAE)	Standard Australian English is the variety of spoken and written English language used in more formal settings, such as official or public purposes, and recorded in dictionaries, style guides and grammars. SAE is recognised by government as the 'common language' of Australians and is the variety identified in the Australian curriculum.
Heritage language	A heritage language is a First Nations language that people may grow up identifying with. Depending on the history of the language and its community, there may be a range of speakers from fluent speakers to some who are barely speaking the language. A heritage language can be one that the person does not speak or understand, but identifies with culturally.
Bilingualism/ multilingualism	Bi/multilingualism is the ability of a person who is able to communicate in more than one language to switch between multiple languages depending on the situation. For First Nations people bilingualism and multilingualism are the norm, rather than the exception. In this document bilingual is used but is also meant to include multilingualism. .
Language repertoire	A set of different languages or language skills that one person can choose to use in different situations.
Language ecology	A language ecology is the way languages and their speakers interact with each other and the places they live.
CLIL- Content Language Integrated Learning	This is the study of curriculum subject content through a second or foreign language. Using the language for meaningful purposes supports the development of specialist academic language (CALP). CLIL is structured and focuses on both language and content. Ideally both language and content teachers work together to plan CLIL units.

Immersion	In an Immersion program the second language is learned through teaching curriculum subjects and interaction rather than through specialist language classes. It uses a range of strategies including body language, pictures, concrete objects and predictable routines to provide meaning. Many immersion programs might use some instruction at some point in the student's L1 to ensure meaning. Without some conscious explicit planning for language development, and teaching that encourages interactive immersion of minority language students, an English language classroom can become a 'submersion' experience.
Submersion	Submersion is a 'sink or swim' approach to learning language. Language learners are immersed in the L2 with little support. Often, they are in classes with learners who are learning and using the language as their first language and teachers who speak the language and are able to teach through the language but are unable to talk about the language. Little attention is paid to understanding the specific language learning requirements of the students or for planning for L2 language development.
EAL/D	English as an Additional Language or Dialect – refers to the processes and pedagogies of teaching and learning of English by students who speak it as an additional language or dialect. This has begun to be used in place of TESL, TESOL – teaching English as a second language.
Whole school planning / Curriculum map	Clear documentation of what teachers will teach, and students will learn and when teaching and learning will happen. Planning should show consideration for students' development in both languages, especially the development of English.
Lingua franca	A language that is used as the shared language in communities where people come from different language backgrounds. In First Nations communities it can be a First Nations language, such as Murrinhpatha or Djambarrpuyŋu, that is used by all members of a new settlement or town. It could also be a creole or variety of English
Minority/majority language	A minority language can refer to a language spoken by a minority of the population, or it can also refer to a language spoken by a group of people with less power than another group. In communities where English is spoken by a minority of the people, it is still the majority language. Speakers of minority languages may have little access to services in their own languages, opportunities for education. There are sometimes widely held beliefs that they are uncultured, primitive, or simple dialects when compared to English.

Appendix 1: Types of bilingual programs (Baker, 2011:209,210)

Type of Program	The learner	Language of the Classroom
Monolingual Forms of Education for Bilinguals		
Mainstreaming/Submersion (Structured Immersion in an English medium program with ESL pedagogies)	Language minority	Majority language
Mainstreaming/ submersion With withdrawal classes/ sheltered English /Content based ESL	Language minority	Majority language with 'pull-out' L2 lessons
Segregation	Language minority	Minority language (forced no choice)
Weak Forms of Education for Bilinguals		
Transitional	Language minority	Moves from minority to majority language
Mainstream with Foreign Language teaching	Language majority	Majority language with L2/FL lessons
Separatist	Language minority	Minority language from choice
Strong Forms of Education for Bilingualism and Bilingualism		
Immersion	Language majority	Bilingual with initial emphasis on L2
Maintenance/ Heritage language	Language minority	Bilingual with emphasis on L1
Two-way /Dual Language	Mixed language minority and majority	Minority and majority
Mainstream Bilingual	Language majority	Two majority languages Pluralism

Societal and Educational Aim	Aim in Language Outcome	Comment
Monolingual Forms of Education for Bilinguals		
Assimilative/ Subtractive	Monolingualism	Many schools in remote contexts
Assimilation/ Subtractive	Monolingualism	Some urban schools
Apartheid	Monolingualism	N/A
Weak Forms of Education for Bilinguals		
Assimilative/ Subtractive	Relative monolingualism	Current STEP model used in some NT schools could be seen as transitional if L1 learning and instruction is not maintained throughout the years of school
Limited enrichment	Limited bilingualism	Some urban schools in the NT
Detachment/ Autonomy	Limited bilingualism	N/A
Strong Forms of Education for Bilingualism and Biliteracy		
Pluralism, enrichment/ Additive	Bilingualism and biliteracy	N/A- except for some non-Aboriginal students in bilingual programs in the NT
Maintenance, pluralism and enrichment/ Additive	Bilingualism and biliteracy	NT Bilingual schools that maintain first language learning and instruction throughout the school years
Maintenance, pluralism and enrichment/ Additive	Bilingualism and biliteracy	While a 50:50 model has been identified for use in some schools, it is not for majority language students
Maintenance and biliteracy/ Enrichment/ Additive	Bilingualism	Currently no schools in the NT

Appendix 2: Some elements of an expert teaching team required to implement bilingual education

Role	Knowledge and skills	Where obtained	Essential/Desirable
School leadership	Understanding of bilingual education, its purpose and how it works Understanding of local community bilingualism and ability to work collaboratively with community	No formal training in bilingual education currently available Professional learning and experience Recognised/accredited by community	Essential
Language teacher	Expert language speakers and cultural knowledge	Recognised/accredited by community	Essential
Bilingual class teacher or team teacher	Strong speaker of language	Recognised/accredited by community as a strong speaker with the right to teach the language to others May be eligible for registration by the state/territory registration authority	Essential
	Experience of the school curriculum and learning including literacy at level 3 of the ACSF and ability to communicate in English	Completed some level of schooling Previous work experience	Essential—although no minimum level should be set
	Ability to plan and teach in the classroom context using Australian Curriculum or willingness to learn	School and system professional learning Accredited training	Essential Highly desirable
	Interest in working with Indigenous students in schools	Community experience	Essential
	Understanding of language teaching methodologies for Indigenous students – and willingness to learn more	Community and school based professional learning	Highly desirable
	Ability to work in teams with parents and community members and Elders	Community experience	Essential
	Willingness to work in a bilingual teaching team	Previous life and/or work experience	Essential

Language Workers	Ability to speak the language and work with culture and knowledge	Recognised by the community as a strong speaker with the right to work with the language	Essential
	Knowledge of the language and how it works or willingness to learn	Community based professional learning Accredited training	Essential
	Some technical/IT skills to record language and produce materials or willingness to learn	School, personal use on-the-job experience	Essential
	Design and publishing skills	Previous community/life experience/interest Accredited training	Desirable
	Willingness to learn to record, store and archive materials	Community based professional learning Accredited training	Essential
Linguist	Knowledge of the language	Some formal accredited training Experience learning language in -community Experience working with language programs in Indigenous languages preferably with the local community	Essential
	Understanding of how the language works, spelling system etc	Formal accredited training, preferably at post graduate level	Essential
	Ability to work with databases and to develop systems for curation, storage and archiving of language resources	Work experience	Essential

Curriculum developers	Understanding and expertise using the Australian curriculum	Accredited teacher training Successful experience working with AC in schools	Essential Essential
	Knowledge and understanding of principles and practices of language learning and bilingual education	Formal accredited training School and system professional learning Successful classroom experience	Essential
	Ability to work collaboratively with First Nations communities and to build relationships between school and community	Demonstrated successful experience attested by community	Essential
	Ability to lead implementation of curriculum within the school	Demonstrated experience	Essential
	Knowledge of the language and culture being taught or willingness to learn	In community Professional learning or accredited training where available	Essential
	Ability to work with databases and to develop systems for curation, storage and archiving of language resources	Demonstrated experience	Desirable
Specialist teachers of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D)	Registered teacher	Accredited teacher training	Essential
	Knowledge and expertise in the teaching of English as an additional language	Specialist training in EAL/D methodology	
	Some knowledge of the language background of the students or willingness to learn	Community, personal school, system professional learning Accredited training where available	Essential
	Ability to work as a member of a bilingual/bicultural teaching team	Previous experience On-the-job and in-community experience	Essential



Warlpiri teacher, Michaeline Napaljarri Gallagher with Transition student, Renelle Brown, and the worksheet she has completed, it involves letter identification, letter formation and beginning word work. Photo: Nyirripi School.



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