

Bilingualism and multilingualism are realities for students across the world, and research suggests that teaching children in their home language promotes effective learning.^{1, 2, 3, 4} Languages are important aspects of students' identities and cultures, and being able to use all of their linguistic abilities in school is important to students' development as learners.⁵

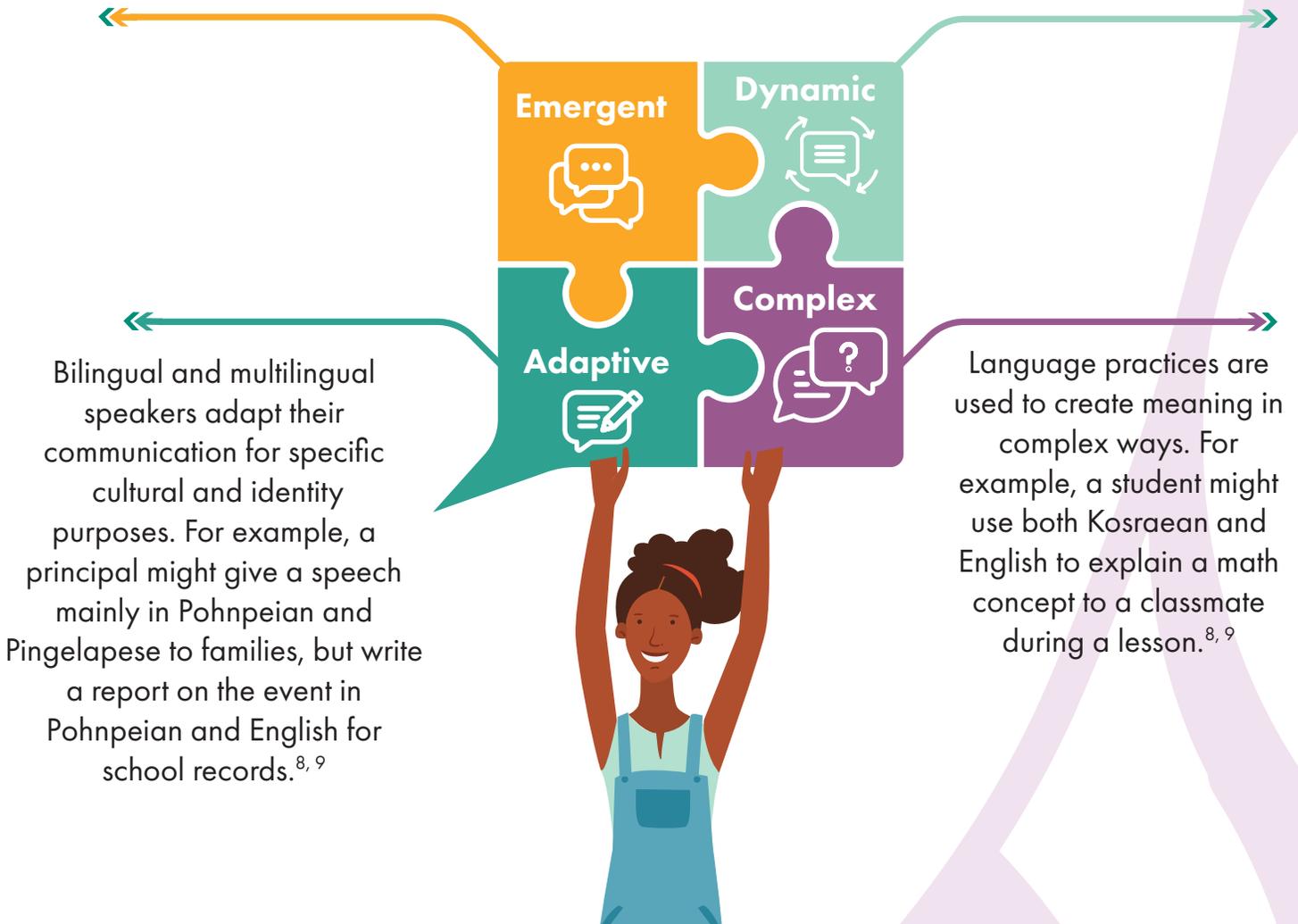
Benefits of Bilingualism and Multilingualism ^{6, 7}



About Bilingualism and Multilingualism

Any additional language skills learned by a child develop from their initial set of language practices (their “home language”). In other words, the more developed a student’s home language is the easier it is, in general, to learn new language skills.^{8,9}

Languages are not separated from one another: all language skills, abilities, and practices are interconnected and form a shared pool of resources that students can use to make meaning.^{8,9}



Bilingual and multilingual speakers adapt their communication for specific cultural and identity purposes. For example, a principal might give a speech mainly in Pohnpeian and Pingelapese to families, but write a report on the event in Pohnpeian and English for school records.^{8,9}

Language practices are used to create meaning in complex ways. For example, a student might use both Kosraean and English to explain a math concept to a classmate during a lesson.^{8,9}



What is Translanguaging?

Whether talking story with friends, attending classes, or scanning the internet, students make choices about their language use to communicate and understand different types of information. Translanguaging is a theory that explains the dynamic way people use language in real life. Translanguaging might look like a student mixing languages when responding to a friend's question by drawing on whatever knowledge and vocabulary they know.¹⁰ It might also look like reading, listening, or watching something in one language and summarizing or interpreting it in another language. In other words, there is no competition between the different languages a student knows — students choose what makes the most sense to communicate based on the cultural and social context.

A Palauan family watches an English TV show together. A younger sibling asks an older sibling questions in Palauan about the show and unfamiliar words. The older sibling could help by explaining in a mix of Palauan and English.



The older sibling knows how to use some Palauan vocabulary in their explanation when an English term does not exist for a specific word or cultural concept. The younger sibling, in turn, can learn new vocabulary and content in both languages.

What does translanguaging look like?



A teacher describes a writing task to students, repeating key words like "decide" and "discussion" in English, and instructs students in Kosraean to work in pairs.



The teacher uses both languages to communicate what she expects students to do during the task. She knows her students' abilities in both languages.

Translanguaging as Pedagogy

Using translanguaging to teach and learn in school mobilizes all of students' linguistic skills.¹³ When used in school, translanguaging has four goals:¹⁴



Support students as they engage with complex content and texts.



Provide opportunities for students to develop academic language practices.



Make space for students' bilingual or multilingual ways of knowing.



Support students' social and emotional development and bilingual or multilingual identities.

Translanguaging Strategies for Teachers



Use bilingual or multilingual labels and word walls, repetition and translation across languages.¹⁴



View students' language abilities as a resource and essential to making meaning.¹⁵



Create some learning objectives that support bilingualism and multilingualism and are not tied to specific languages. For example, "Students will be able to summarize solutions to math problems both orally and in writing."¹⁶



Create an assignment in which students read or tell stories to one another using their home language and then translate them into English to share with other students.¹⁷



Pair students with similar language backgrounds but different proficiency levels so that they can support and learn from each other.¹⁸



Provide a variety of resources in multiple languages for students. If resources are only available in one language, explain and discuss concepts in the language(s) spoken in the classroom. Encourage students to do the same.¹⁹



Model and accept flexible language use both orally and written.²⁰



Scaffold and use exploratory talk, providing space for students to use language to try out new ideas and new grammatical forms.²¹ This practice can also support the development of academic language.²²

References

- Adesope, O. O., Lavin, T., Thompson, T., & Ungerleider, C. (2010). A systematic review and meta-analysis of the cognitive correlates of bilingualism. *Review of Educational Research*, 80(2), 207–245. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ889125> (Endnote 6)
- Baetens Beardsmore, H. (2018). *Plurilingualism et créativité*. In J. Erfurt, E. Corporal, & A. Weirich (Eds.), *L'éducation bi-/plurilingue pour tous. Enjeux politiques, sociaux, et éducatifs*. Peter Lang. (Endnote 7)
- Cummins, J. (2019). The emergence of translanguaging pedagogy: A dialogue between theory and practice. *Journal of Multilingual Education Research*, (9)13, 9–36. <https://fordham.bepress.com/jmer/vol9/iss1/13> (Endnote 13)
- Edwards, J. A. (2005). *Exploratory talk in peer groups—exploring the zone of proximal development*. *Language and Mathematics*, 831–840. (Endnote 23)
- García, O., Kleifgen, J. A. (2018). *Educating emergent bilinguals: Policies, programs, and practices for English learners*. Teachers College Press. (Endnotes 2, 14, 16, and 20)
- García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education*. Palgrave Macmillan. (Endnotes 5, 8, 10, 15, and 17)
- Gibbons, P. (2015) *Scaffolding language, scaffolding learning*. 2nd ed. Heinemann. (Endnote 22)
- Gómez, L., Freeman, D., & Freeman, Y. (2005). Dual language education: A Promising 50–50 model. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 29(1), 145–164. (Endnotes 12 and 19)
- May, S. (2017). *Bilingual education: What the research tells us*. In O. García, A. Lin & S. May (Eds.), *Bilingual/multilingual education*. *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (3rd ed.). Springer. (Endnotes 9 and 11)
- Michael-Luna, S., & Canagarajah, S. (2007). Multilingual Academic Literacies. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 55–77. (Endnotes 18 and 21)
- Nag, S., Vagh, S. B., Dulay, K. M., & Snowling, M. J. (2019). Home language, school language and children's literacy attainments: A systematic review of evidence from low- and middle-income countries. *Review of Education*, 7(1), 91–150. (Endnote 4)
- UNESCO. (2020). *Approaches to language in education for migrants and refugees in the Asia-Pacific Region*. UNESCO and UNICEF. (Endnote 1)
- Wagner, D. A. (2018). *Learning as development: Rethinking international education in a changing world*. Routledge. (Endnote 3)