



Teaching Skill Transference is not Concurrent Translation

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Explaining a concept by constantly and concurrently translating from one language to another is an ineffective way for teaching students a second language. Instead, students should be challenged to apply the knowledge they already possess in one language to the other, through a contrastive analysis of the two languages. The explicit teaching of skill transference increases student's metalinguistic awareness and promotes high levels of biliteracy.

In the context of skill transference, teachers use student's primary language as the instructional language. The contrastive analysis of a primary language skill and the same skill in the target language becomes the content of the lesson.

Specific academic vocabulary and language structures in the second language are gradually introduced and practiced with the teacher. This serves to frontload academic instruction in targeted language.

Teachers use graphic organizers, posters, visuals, color-coding, text features, rubrics, as instructional tools to emphasize similarity of learning condition between L1 and L2.

Primary Language is used to:

1. Review and affirm attainment of the concept and key academic vocabulary to be introduced in the target language.
2. Provide the comparative or contrastive analysis of the skill or strategy.
3. Negotiate meaning during the orientation, presentation and highly structured practice phases of the lesson.

Target Language is used to:

1. Re-introduce concept and academic vocabulary
2. During highly structured practice, guided practice
3. During independent practice scaffolded systematically towards progress at differentiated levels of language performance.

During independent practice in the targeted language, student work is differentiated by levels of language acquisition and organized for sequential progression towards achievement of the language arts standard. Teaching skill transference enables students to avail themselves of concepts and skills known in L1 to achieve rigorous grade level standards and high levels of proficient biliteracy. Explicit contrastive analysis instruction increases metalinguistic and metacognitive skills. As learners of a new language, students draw upon knowledge of their native language and gain metacognitive awareness of what language is and how it is used and applied in their second language.