



Differences Impacting Literacy Development Between Monolingual English Learners And Bilingual Learners

Compiled by Dr. Kathy Escamilla

Monolingual English Speakers	Bilingual Learners
Exposed to English almost exclusively both in and out of school. Live in a primarily English world.	Hear and use two or more languages – primarily English at school and primarily another language at home or in the community.
Speak and are learning the language of status, power, and prestige in and out of school.	Home languages are often marginalized, stigmatized, and undervalued at school or in the community. Non-English languages do not share the same status as English.
Have only one linguistic resource to use in communication, and learning.	Use all linguistic resources (in two languages) when listening to speech, when speaking, writing and interacting with text. Use of translanguageing is often misunderstood and assumed to be a problem of cross-linguistic confusion.
Only use one language in neuro-cognitive processing.	Use both languages when listening to speech, when reading words in either language, and when planning speech in either of the two languages.
Can speak and understand the language in which they are learning to read.	In English-taught programs, are learning to read in a language that they simultaneously are still learning to speak and understand.
Can understand classroom instructional and management language.	Must learn to understand and interpret teacher management and instructional language as well as learn to hear sounds in words to decode, understand and read English fluently.
Reading programs and assessments have been developed for and are normed on them.	Reading assessments and programs, in English, were not normed on Bilingual Learners and often underestimate what these children know and can do, resulting in their assignment to “lower” groups and unnecessary, often long-term interventions.
Cultural references in reading materials are aligned with monolingual English learners and their cultures.	Interpret the world through multiple cultural and linguistic lenses, and there is often cultural bias in reading materials.