

Bridges to Comprehension: Choosing and Using Culturally Relevant Bilingual Books

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Bilingual Books: Bridges across Languages and Cultures

Hay tantísimas fronteras
que dividen a la gente,
pero, por cada frontera
existe también un puente

Poesía de Gina Valdés: *Puentes y Fronteras: Coplas Chicanas*

Types of Bilingual Books:

- In some cases, two books are available, one in each language.
- In other cases, a single book has the text written in two languages
- Some books flip over with one language on each side

Translation

- When using bilingual books, it is important to check to be sure that the translation is a good one.
- This is true whether the translation is from English to Spanish or from Spanish to English.
- Literal translations result in inferior literature.


Using Bilingual Books:

- ☑ The teacher or the students read the book in their first language as a preview. Later, the teacher or the students read the book in their second language.
- ☑ Students choose the language they want to read in.
- ☑ The students read in their second language and use the first language text as a resource to check if they have difficulty.
- ☑ Students compare and contrast versions of a book written in two languages. This is a good linguistic investigation.

Students Improve Their Skills in Both Languages

- ☑ Bilingual authors allow students to develop proficiency in their first and second languages.
- ☑ Bilingual books can be read by Spanish speaking and English speaking parents and then shared with their children.
- ☑ Monolingual English speakers can look at bilingual books to become aware that other languages have value and serve a purpose.
- ☑ Bilingual books help strengthen the home school connection.
- ☑ Bilingual books are an excellent resource for a dual language program.
- ☑ Bilingual books can serve as models for students to write their own bilingual books.

Like all books that teachers choose, bilingual books should have characteristics that support reading

	Checklist: Characteristics of Texts that Support Reading
	<p>1. Is the language of the text natural? When there are only a few words on a page, do these limited-text books sound like real language, something people really say?</p>
	<p>2. Are the materials authentic? Authentic materials are written to inform or entertain, not to teach a grammar point, a letter-sound correspondence, or a series of related syllables.</p>
	<p>3. Is the text predictable? Text is more predictable when readers have background knowledge of the concepts.</p> <p>For emergent readers: Books are more predictable when they follow certain patterns (repetitive, cumulative) or include certain devices (rhyme, rhythm, alliteration).</p> <p>For developing readers: Books are more predictable when students are familiar with text structures; beginning, middle, end, problem-solution, main idea, details, examples, etc.</p>
	<p>4. Are the materials interesting and/or imaginative? Interesting, imaginative texts engage students.</p>
	<p>5. Is there a good text-picture match? A good match provides nonlinguistic visual cues. Is the placement of the pictures predictable?</p>
	<p>6. Are the texts culturally relevant? Do the situations and characters in the book represent the experiences and backgrounds of the students?</p>

From: Freeman, D. & Y. Freeman. (2000). *Teaching reading in multilingual classrooms* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Using Culturally Relevant Texts

- When teachers use culturally relevant texts, students are more engaged.
- Readers comprehend culturally relevant texts better because the students have more background knowledge about the situations and characters.
- At least some of the texts students, especially ELL's, read should be culturally relevant.

Choosing Bilingual Books with Characteristics of Text that Support Reading

When teachers use bilingual books with characteristics of text that support reading:

- Students develop biliteracy
- Students are more engaged
- They comprehend the texts more fully
- They develop a love of reading