

Teaching English Literacy to ESL Immigrant Students

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Introduction

Canada relies heavily on immigrants for population growth and to maintain a skilled workforce. In all likelihood, the number of immigrants arriving in Canada each year will continue to rise for the foreseeable future. Given the extent to which Canada relies on immigrants to remain competitive in the global knowledge economy, Canadian schools and teachers must be well-equipped to foster successful learning outcomes among immigrant ESL students.

ESL immigrant students bring a unique mix of strengths and challenges into the classroom. In the current review, we consider their strengths, reviewing evidence bearing on the following question:

What are the cognitive benefits of bilingualism?

We also consider ESL students' particular challenges, reviewing evidence bearing on a second question:

Which teaching strategies are most effective in teaching English literacy to ESL immigrant students?

Finally, we integrate the evidence on both questions and consider which practices in teaching literacy to ESL immigrant students can best exploit the particular strengths ESL students bring to the classroom.

Search Strategy

A primary search was conducted using the following search strategy:

Population bilingual OR "bilingual education" OR "bilingual education programs" OR "bilingual instruction materials" OR "bilingual schools" OR "bilingual students" OR "bilingual teachers" OR "bilingual teaching materials" OR bilingualism OR biliteracy OR "English as a second language" OR "English as a Second Language Instruction" OR "English as a Second Language Learning" OR "English as a Second Language Tests" OR ESL OR "foreign speakers" OR "immigrant students" OR "multilingual materials" OR multilingualism OR plurilingualism OR "second language" OR "second language learning" OR "second language reading instruction"

ISSUE "active learning" OR "code switching" OR "concentrated study" OR "contextual learning" OR decoding OR diglossia OR "english immersion" OR "experiential learning" OR "immersion method" OR "immersion programs" OR "inquiry-based learning" OR "language arts education" OR "language contact" OR "language experience approach" OR "learner controlled instruction" OR meaningfulness OR "phonetic method" OR phonetics OR phonics OR "phonological awareness" OR "portfolio assessment" OR "problem based learning" OR "reading education" OR "reading improvement" OR "reading instruction" OR "reading intervention" OR "reading recovery program" OR "reading skills" OR "reading strategies" OR "remedial teaching" OR "teaching methods" OR "thematic approach" OR "verbal development" OR vocabulary OR "vocabulary development" OR "word recognition" OR metacognition OR "metalinguistic awareness" OR metalinguistics OR "problem solving" OR "reading strategies" OR reasoning OR "semantic processing"

A second search was done with just population and the following:
"Meta analysis" OR metaanalysis OR meta-analysis OR "systematic Review"

Inclusion/Exclusion

First inclusion: Two researchers reviewed the titles, abstracts and keywords of the captured articles and applied the following criteria:

Question 1: What are the cognitive benefits of bilingualism?

	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Population	Bilingual speakers All ages	People with learning disabilities
Measured Outcome	Theory-of-mind tasks Problem solving skills Creative thinking Divergent thinking Cognitive flexibility Learning strategies Abstract representation Abstract reasoning Meta-linguistic awareness Meta-cognitive skills Working memory	Brain activity Code switching Cross language priming Social identity Best practice of bilingualism Psycho-social outcomes
Measurement Tools	Standard tests Teaching developed tests Questionnaire Writing samples Observation	No quantitative data
Methodology	Experimental research	Program guides Editorial/opinion Descriptive studies Books

Question 1: Which teaching strategies are most effective in teaching English literacy to ESL immigrant students?

	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Population	Immigrant ESL students in English speaking countries K-12 Public or private schools	ESD French Canadian Students with learning disabilities
Measured Outcome	Identified teaching strategy	
Measurement Tools	Reading Writing	Oral language only
Methodology	Experimental research	Program guides Editorial/opinion Descriptive studies Books

Double Screening: In order to test the reliability of the process, 45 articles were randomly selected to be reviewed by both researchers. Kappa = .88.

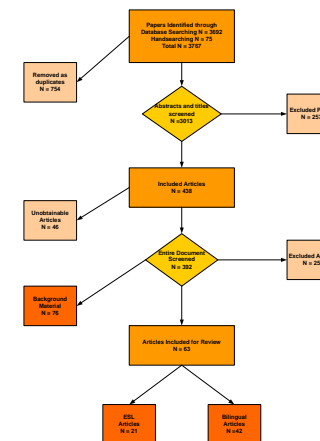
Second inclusion: Articles retained after the first inclusion were randomly assigned to two groups. Each of the researchers took on one group of articles and reviewed the entire article to determine whether it fit the criteria. Articles that would normally be excluded but that may nonetheless be informative were included as background articles. Articles that were not successfully retrieved were excluded.

Hand searched articles: Reference sections from meta-analyses and background articles were hand searched and identified articles were screened through first and second inclusions.

Double screening: 38 articles were randomly selected to be reviewed by both researchers. Kappa = 0.92.

Results

The first and second inclusion/exclusion procedures yielded the following results:



Coding

Coding and analysis are currently underway.